

# What's the rush for coal power plant?

**T**he League of Women Voters of South Carolina asks Santee Cooper: What's the rush for a pulverized coal plant in Florence County?

Just this past May, Progress Energy of Charlotte announced a self-imposed moratorium on any new nuclear and coal-burning power plants for the next two years. During this time period the utility will be devoted to educating their customers on energy efficiency in order to reduce the use of electricity. Progress Energy's initiative is a result of the growing national concern over global warming and environmental damage caused by major power plants.

In March 2006, Santee Cooper of South Carolina announced plans to construct a new 600-megawatt coal-fired power plant in Florence County by 2014. The date for the plant to become operational has been moved to 2012, two years earlier than originally planned.

Santee Cooper is South Carolina's state-owned electric utility. It provides service for residential and commercial customers in Berkeley, Georgetown and Horry Counties. The utility sells power to 20 electric cooperatives across the state. Its mission is to be the state's leading energy

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resource and to improve the quality of life of the people of South Carolina.

Santee Cooper has an excellent track record in working with communities and providing customer service. This company has offered "green power" choices to its customers since the early '90s. In the past two months alone, Santee Cooper announced commendable energy conservation projects in wind power research, net billing and a green power solar school pilot program in Florence.

So why build an outdated conventional coal plant?

If Santee Cooper is committed to its mission of being "the state's leading energy resource" and the lowest-cost producer and distributor of reliable energy, then isn't it time for the utility to look harder at power options? Shouldn't the company also consider investing in the "cleanest" energy possible for South Carolina? It would be foolhardy to jeopardize our

air, soil and water quality to fulfill a commitment of being the lowest-cost energy producer. In addition to the external costs associated with cheap fossil fuel solutions, we are likely to also face payment in profound measure, such as from the costs of health care, air pollution, warming waters and green house gas effects.

In recognition of global climate change — the environmental impacts to come in South Carolina and the need for a new course in commerce to accommodate those impacts — Gov. Mark Sanford has initiated a Climate Energy and Commerce Advisory Committee (CECAC) whose work will identify how we can modify dependence on fossil fuel usage and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The committee's diverse group of stakeholders includes legislators, utility CEOs, renewable energy experts, academics, and representatives from large manufacturers, conservation groups and state government. During a year's time, these professionals will hammer out approaches to incorporating energy alternatives and efficiency measures that best suit our state's circumstances ([www.scclimatechange.us](http://www.scclimatechange.us)). States that are leading the nation in climate strategies are using the same process.

The League of Women Voters

of South Carolina questions whether our state should meet growing energy demand in a way that promises significantly more pollution beyond what South Carolina already contributes to global warming. We think it makes sense for Santee Cooper to slow down and take stock rather than rush to construct a coal-fired power plant in the Pee Dee.

In June 2008, the South Carolina Climate Energy and Commerce Advisory Committee will report its findings. The LWVSC urges officials at Santee Cooper to roll up their sleeves and work with the CECAC toward a more sustainable answer to energy demand. Over the next two years, we'd like to see Santee Cooper use its track record for quality customer service to educate customers on efficiency options. In view of growth projections for our state, we need to be proactive in accommodating increased population without compromising our most valuable assets — the health and welfare of our people and our natural resources.

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