

## **Economic study on proposed coal-burning plant results released**

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FLORENCE — Santee Cooper officials held a press conference Thursday on the Francis Marion University campus to discuss an economic impact study economics professors at the university compiled for the organization.

Drs. David Franck, Barry O'Brien and Jeffrey Pompe are the three professors who examined the economics of the region both before and after the proposed 600-megawatt coal-fired power plant. The plant is to be built on a 2,709-acre tract along the Great Pee Dee River and is scheduled to be operational after 2012.

The study said the plant will generate nearly \$900 million for South Carolina's economy over the five-year construction period and will bring more than 9,300 jobs to the region over the course of its construction phase, combined with the 40 to 50 year life span of the facility.

"This is part of Santee Cooper's overall plan to make sure we are doing what we are tasked to do, which is provide reliable affordable environmentally-sound power to the state, and this is part of that process," Santee Cooper CEO Lonnie Carter said. "We view that as very positive and we know the community will look at it as very positive."

Carter said he thinks the results of the study prove Santee Cooper's commitment to the community and the state. He said people need to start looking not only at the number of jobs the plant will bring to the region, but also at the amount of money the people working at those jobs will spend in the Pee Dee.

"The people who will work in that plant will run the whole gamut of the organization," he said. "The average salary will be \$50,000 — that's base pay — and so that's going from the guy that's low man on the totem pole all the way up to the management team for the plant."

The study contained information about the total cost of the coal-fired plant, as well as the revenue the proposed plant has the potential to bring to the region where jobs can be hard to find.

But not everyone was thrilled with the results of the study. Bob Wislinski, with the Coastal Conservation League, said he doesn't think all the costs were tallied in the report. "We think that this amount of money that they are generating is an impressive amount," he said, "but we would say that any amount of money that was spent on any energy

conservation effort would produce the same result without the negative effects on health which are not factored into this.”

Wislinski said he hopes Santee Cooper will consider other options before to moving forward with the coal-fired plant.

“We think if we could get Santee Cooper to look at alternatives, we could have all the positive results they are feeding us today without the negatives,” he said.

FMU President Dr. Fred Carter, who is no relation to Lonnie Carter, said he was happy the professors had the opportunity to be involved in this sort of research project.

“I think it’s terrific that anybody comes to our faculty and asks them to undertake a research effort,” he said. “It certainly underscores the caliber of faculty we have on this campus that they can do that type of research.”