



September 17, 2007

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DHEC to issue draft coal plant permit; sets stage for debate

Despite the urging of conservation groups, the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control today announced that it will issue a draft air permit in early October for Santee Cooper's proposed expansion of its Pee Dee power plant before the completion of a comprehensive environmental review. The 1320 megawatt expansion would emit about 8.7 million tons of carbon dioxide every year, over 300 pounds of mercury and thousands of tons of soot- and smog-forming pollutants annually for at least 50 years.

Blan Holman: "It makes zero sense to issue any permit before environmental studies are complete, but this permit is called a draft for a reason. Now the state will turn to the crucial debate of whether South Carolinians want another dinosaur coal plant or something cleaner, smarter and ultimately cheaper. The environmental impact study will look at issues like the mercury and the global warming pollution of an old-style plant. It will also present a chance to look at other options including gains in efficiency, which other states are now using to meet their energy needs.

"The Southern Environmental Law Center will review this draft air permit very carefully to ensure that any final permit issued for the proposed Pee Dee expansion complies with the law and safeguards human health."

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