



Protecting the environment and working for a healthy community.

Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Jamestown Coal Project

Comments by Citizens Campaign for the Environment

Jamestown, NY

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Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. My name is Brian Smith, and I am Program Coordinator with Citizens Campaign for the Environment (CCE). Founded in 1985, CCE is a non-partisan, non-profit advocacy organization working to protect the natural environment and public health throughout New York State. I am here on today on behalf of our 80,000 members throughout the state, with many who reside here in Jamestown.

General Comments

For many years, we have been held hostage by our addiction to fossil fuels, which has had serious consequences to our society, such as sky rocketing and uncontrollable energy costs, pollution that is detrimental to our environment, degraded human health, and national security issues. We are now at an energy crossroads in our country and around the globe. We can make a choice, continue down this destructive path, or go in a new direction. The choice is now before us here in Jamestown.

In particular, electricity generated from coal-fired power plants is very harmful to human health, wildlife, plants, and our natural environment. Coal plants emit:

- Nitrogen oxides and sulfur dioxides, the two precursors to acid rain, which has contributed to more than 500 lakes in the Adirondacks being left lifeless;
- Mercury, a bioaccumulative toxic heavy metal that leads to developmental and neurological damage in wildlife and humans, with children and pregnant woman especially susceptible to these dangers. 87 bodies of water in New York State have specific advisories against fish consumption due to mercury pollution;
- Particulate matter or soot, which is estimated to cause 1,200 premature deaths and 2,500 heart attacks per year in NYS; and most importantly
- Carbon dioxide, which is the chief greenhouse gas associated with global climate change. Scientists agree that global climate change represents the most serious threats to our environment that we face, including but not limited to, rising sea levels, drought, decreasing lake levels in the Great Lakes, and increased severe weather events.

In addition, extracting coal from mines is also a very destructive, dirty and dangerous process. Some of the serious consequences of extracting coal include mountain top removal, which destroys our topography and annihilates ecosystems, and dangerous coal mining, which puts workers at risk to severe accidents or death. The entire life cycle of our use of coal should be considered in this process.

Specific comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)

While the DEIS claims that the new plant will reduce emissions of Nox, SO₂, and Hg from the levels at the current outdated coal plant, we can do much better. The new plant admittedly does very little to reduce CO₂ emissions, which as I mentioned, is having a profoundly negative impact on our Earth. There are viable alternatives that are environmentally benign, and we have a responsibility to utilize them.

The DEIS fails to sufficiently explore viable alternatives

The DEIS asserts that there are no viable alternatives to building this coal fired power plant. While there is no magic bullet that will address all of our energy needs, a combination of energy conservation and efficiency, purchasing electricity off of the grid, and purchasing wind power from one of the many local projects that are moving forward in WNY, can meet our energy needs, provide economic benefits, and protect public health and our natural environment.

Energy Conservation/ Energy Efficiency

While the DEIS does reference some energy conservation programs, there are many more state and federal programs available, and these programs should be far more aggressively pursued. Energy conservation will benefit the environment and save ratepayers money. Surely, we can meet this moderate energy need of 15% with the newer innovative technologies that include renewables, energy efficiency and energy conservation.

Wind Power

The DEIS also claims that because the Chautauqua wind project has not progressed, the option of purchasing wind power from a local wind farm is not an option at this time, and they will look in to this in the future. There are numerous other wind proposals moving forward in the WNY area, and the alternative of purchasing wind should not be dismissed solely due to one project. Other wind farms will undoubtedly come on line in the near future, and in the meantime, electricity can also be purchased off of the grid to meet demand.

The benefits of wind power are unparalleled. Wind power requires zero fuel and generates zero emissions. It is locally generated energy that contributes to better human health, reduces dependence on foreign oil, and helps to reverse some of the most serious environmental threats from acid rain and global warming. It truly is an investment in our future.

While the cost of electricity generated from coal has and will continue to escalate, the cost of wind has and will continue to fall. The United States Department of Energy estimates that the average cost of energy over a 20-year period beginning in 2010 will be \$50.54 per MWh for wind and \$53.42 for coal. Burning coal is not the reason that Jamestown residents pay very little for their electricity. Jamestown is fortunate to receive a significant portion of their electricity from Niagara Falls hydroelectric power. Many years ago our forefathers had the foresight to begin producing electricity from Niagara Falls. Today, we are fighting over the electricity produced by this renewable energy source because of its very low price. The opportunity to once again invest in the renewable energy of the future is before us now, and we must capitalize our strong wind resources.

Conclusion

We have an opportunity to do our part in changing our nation's addiction to dirty, dangerous fossil fuels. As the current plant runs its course, we must not make a decision that will shackle ourselves to fossil fuel addiction for decades to come. Making the decision to build a new coal plant is the "quick fix" easy way out approach to energy that is currently destroying our planet, our natural resources and our health. We must take this opportunity to explore new, safer options.

CCE is opposed to the Jamestown Board of Public Utilities decision to build a new, 43 MW coal power plant in Jamestown. We urge the Jamestown BPU to more aggressively pursue alternatives that will benefit our economy, public health, and the natural environment.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Respectfully submitted,

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