

# Clean and Affordable Energy Needed for North Carolina

## Talking Points for Opposing Proposed Building of Coal Fired Power Plants in Cliffside, NC

Duke Energy is asking the NC Utilities Commission for permission to create one of the nation's largest coal burning plants by expanding its Cliffside plant (60 miles west of Charlotte.) Unfortunately, Duke Energy is ignoring the opportunity for a more affordable, reliable, and clean energy future by investing in renewable resources and energy efficiency programs instead of dirty coal.

**North Carolinians are being misled.** Efficiency and renewable resources are far cheaper than adding new polluting power plants and would actually save the utility companies – and taxpayers – money. It costs more than 4 cents per kilowatt hour to create electricity in a coal or nuclear plant but only 3 cents per kilowatt hour to finance energy efficiency programs. Duke Energy has not adequately explored the alternative of energy efficiency first.

***Public health and conservation organizations have been voicing concerns about Duke Energy's proposed coal plants because:***

- New coal burning facilities will increase carbon dioxide (global warming pollutant) and mercury emissions (22 species of fish in NC are contaminated with mercury).
- Duke Energy and NC should invest in energy efficiency programs and renewable energy instead of polluting power plants. Duke could meet growing energy demand in the state with energy efficiency and clean energy, but will have no reason to support conserving power upon construction of Cliffside. Duke Energy wants to raise customers' rates in NC to pay for Cliffside.
- A recent cost estimate for its construction has jumped from \$2 billion to \$3 billion. Huge costs associated with the building of new coal and nuclear power plants would be better spent investing in improving energy efficiency and clean energy programs in the state;
- The new plant, while it will have to meet modern air pollution standards by installing pollution control devices, will still emit substantial increases in pollutants, including uncounted toxics. The new units will emit approximately:
  - ~11.7 million tons of new carbon dioxide (the leading global warming pollutant)
  - 13,766 tons of sulfur dioxide (causes regional haze and particulate matter)
  - 1,741 tons of PM10 (causes heart and lung damage)
  - 5,531 tons of nitrogen oxide (causes ozone smog)
  - 10,327 tons of carbon monoxide (lethal in confined spaces)
  - 580 pounds of Mercury (a potent neurotoxin which is poisoning the fish we eat)

### ***Some key points to make to the NC Utilities Commission:***

- By law, the NC Utilities Commission's mission is:
  - to promote energy conservation,
  - seek the "least cost" option for energy planning,
  - provide just and reasonable rates, and
  - include the public good in the regulation of power companies.

Given that mission, the NCUC must deny Duke's Cliffside proposal because it is not the most affordable option, is not in the public good, and does not promote energy conservation.

- The "least cost option" mandate for the Utilities Commission is a pivotal issue at this time. Duke Energy recently announced that the projected cost of building the new coal units at its Cliffside facility has increased from \$2 billion to \$3 billion. The \$3 billion price tag will not be paid by Duke Energy, but by North Carolinians through rate hikes in their power bills.
- North Carolinians would be better served through investments in efficiency and renewable energy because they are the least expensive and most reliable option for North Carolina's energy future. (Duke Energy will make significantly more profit by building this \$2 billion power plant and passing along the costs to ratepayers, than if they invested in energy efficiency alternatives.)
- Duke Energy has not adequately explored investment in energy efficiency and renewable energy sources an alternative to new coal generation.

### ***Why invest in energy efficiency and renewable energy instead of coal?***

- Energy efficiency and renewable energy sources reduce our dependence on out-of-state and foreign energy imports while keeping jobs and money in the state.
- Energy efficiency makes economic sense; programs to save energy cost 25% less than generating electricity from coal or nuclear. Renewable resources like wind will generate electricity, add jobs, and cut air pollution in North Carolina.
- Energy efficiency creates more jobs across North Carolina; a recent study from Appalachian State University estimates energy efficiency programs could save \$3 billion and support over 150,000 jobs in NC. A recent study for the NC Utilities Commission found that renewable energy investment could generate "a net of thousands of jobs over the next 20 years, as new renewable-related fields expand while conventional energy jobs decrease."
- States that have invested in energy efficiency have experienced greater economic growth per capita with more efficiency spending than North Carolina.
- Energy efficiency provides millions of dollars in energy savings to consumers and state and municipal government.
- Energy efficiency is the lowest cost option for North Carolina ratepayers and will save businesses and the taxpayers money through lower power bills.