

KY Public Service Commission
Attn. Jeff DeRouen
Re.: Case 2012-00063

August 17, 2012

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PUBLIC SERVICE
COMMISSION

Dear Sirs,

I am a customer of Kenergy in Daviess County. I wanted to attend Tuesday's hearing in Henderson, but was unable to do so. Please consider this letter as 'written comments' in regard to this case. (I sent this in the form of an e-mail on Tuesday. Upon my inquiry about the e-mail, I was advised that I should send it in the form of a letter.)

I live on a farm near Maceo, having retired from a career as a research scientist in 2000. I support the effort of the EPA to clean up air and water pollution resulting from the heavy reliance on coal for electrical power generation in our region.

When I read about Big Rivers' plans for complying with recently adopted EPA regulations for coal-fired power plants I was disappointed that they essentially plan to continue to rely almost exclusively on burning coal. They do propose to convert one small coal plant (Reid) to natural gas. If I understand correctly, this plant has been off-line, so rather than reducing coal usage, conversion to natural gas will, in effect, be burning a small amount of natural gas in addition the large amount of coal used in the rest of its fleet of plants.

Moreover, the plan does not include any effort to reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

In recent years, there has been a dramatic shift from coal to natural gas as a source of electricity in the US. This shift has happened for two reasons: 1) a sharp sustained decline in the price of natural gas, and 2) natural gas is much cleaner burning than coal and produces no toxic ash. Sadly, Kentucky seems to be determined to continue to rely on coal as long as possible.

The world presently faces the threat of runaway global warming due the vast amounts of greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere, primarily as the result of burning fossil fuels, and to a lesser extent other human activities such as the destruction of forests. Despite the accumulating scientific evidence linking fossil fuel burning to warmer global surface temperatures, and the alarming consequences of warming on record heat waves, droughts, wildfires, desertification, torrential rainfall, flooding, violent storms, melting ice sheets, rising seas, acidification of the ocean, and the extinction of vulnerable species of animals and plants, most of the world (and the US in particular) has been slow to accept the reality and seriousness of the climate threat and to take even modest prudent measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Instead, the American public have been led to doubt the scientific consensus by a cynical public relations and lobbying campaign funded by the fossil fuel industry.

Although the effects of global warming are all too easy to see, this is nothing compared to what future generations will face. A sobering example is the billion people in Asia who depend on annual snowmelt from the Himalayas to maintain river flow during the dry season for irrigation, domestic water supply,

industrial uses, and replenishment of aquifers. If some of the precipitation from monsoons falling on the mountains is no longer stored in the form of ice and snow, and then released slowly, a billion (mostly poor) people will be forced to migrate or die. (A similar scenario will play out in the arid American Southwest, in Chile, and elsewhere.) Wealthy countries (including the US) that burned vast amounts of fossil fuels to support their 'lifestyles' will be blamed, and with considerable justification.

There is abundant natural gas available at attractive prices. When burned, coal generates roughly twice the amount of CO₂ as natural gas on an equivalent BTU basis. (Coal burning also produces nitrous oxide that is an extremely potent greenhouse gas.) Processing and transporting coal is also energy intensive. Moreover, modern natural gas turbines are highly efficient. Like a jet engine, turbines compress the gas and air before it is ignited; the explosive force of this combustion spins a rotor connected to a generator. Heat from the exhaust gases creates steam to drive a second generator, creating additional power. In coal plants, most of the energy is wasted. Unlike coal plants, natural gas plants can be ramped up quickly to meet fluctuating demand, making it ideal for complementing variable renewable sources like wind and solar which are expected to be increasingly important in the future.

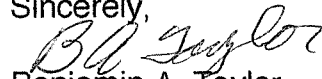
I would like to see Big Rivers build at least one substantial, modern gas turbine plant, and also commit to a program of gradually increasing the share of renewable power sources in their energy portfolio.

I believe the PSC has a responsibility to assure that utilities protect public safety while fulfilling their mission of providing reliable and affordable energy to the public. Burning vast amounts of coal and dumping the resulting greenhouse gases into the atmosphere is a reckless practice that will assure increasing human misery, economic losses, and premature death in the coming decades and centuries. At 71, I won't live to see the worst of it. My children, and my grandchildren, especially, may.

Since the end of the last ice age about 11,700 years ago, humans have populated most of the globe, established civilizations, developed complex industrial societies, and even begun exploring space. Why destroy the favorable climate that supported this amazing story - on the only planet humans will ever call home?

"A good planet is hard to find."

Sincerely,



Benjamin A. Taylor

419 Yelvington-Grandview Road
Maceo, KY 42355

(270) 264-5270