

Press Release from Fall-line Alliance for a Clean Environment, GreenLaw, Ogeechee Riverkeeper, Sierra Club's Georgia Chapter, Southern Alliance for Clean Energy, and Southern Environmental Law Center

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Court rules GA failed to set safe limits on pollutants from coal plant

ATLANTA—A Georgia state court today rejected Georgia's air quality permit for Plant Washington, a proposed 850 mega-watt coal-fired power plant in Sandersville, GA. According to today's ruling, the state permit for the Plant Washington violated Clean Air Act safeguards to limit harmful air pollution.

The Georgia Environmental Protection Division must reconsider its permit after the court found it failed to set safe limits on harmful emissions from the plant, including dozens of hazardous air pollutants that can cause cancer, birth defects, heart disease, developmental disorders, and other serious injuries.

Plant Washington is a project of Power4Georgians, a company organized by Cobb Electric Membership Corporation (EMC) and four other EMCs.

GreenLaw and the Southern Environmental Law Center challenged the state air quality permit in court on behalf of the Fall-line Alliance for a Clean Environment, Ogeechee Riverkeeper, Sierra Club's Georgia Chapter, and Southern Alliance for Clean Energy.

Quotes from the attorney and client groups represented in the legal challenge follow:

"Throughout this case, the State took the untenable position that the Clean Air Act does not apply in Georgia," said Kurt Ebersbach, a senior attorney with GreenLaw. "This decision affirms that it does apply and that EPD failed to follow its dictates in setting appropriate limits for the many hazardous air pollutants that this proposed coal plant would emit in large quantities."

"The Plant Washington permit flouted basic Clean Air Act laws established to protect people and the environment from highly toxic air pollutants," said John Suttles, a senior attorney at the Southern Environmental Law Center who argued the case before the court.

“By holding this massive coal-burning plant to the letter of the law, today’s ruling is a landmark victory for clean air and the health of Georgia residents.”

“This is a huge victory for the residents of Washington County and surrounding areas who have long been concerned that limits set by EPD were not adequate to protect public health,” said Katherine Helms Cummings, director of the Fall-line Alliance for a Clean Environment. “We appreciate Judge Walker’s careful consideration of the evidence and testimony and her adherence to what the law requires.”

“This ruling is an early Christmas present for our families,” said Chandra Brown, executive director, Ogeechee Riverkeeper. “We are thrilled that the judge ruled in favor of protecting the people who would be forced to breathe the hazardous air pollution from this proposed dirty coal plant. Now, if only the state environmental regulators would quit wasting tax payers money by defending permits that allow illegal levels of pollution, we will be celebrating happy New Year and progress for Georgia’s communities.”

“This decision further highlights that the push for this plant by Cobb EMC, which already charges members some of the highest energy rates in the state, is a looming financial pitfall,” said Colleen Kiernan Director of the Georgia Chapter of the Sierra Club. “Co-ops can meet their energy needs with cost-effective energy efficiency and we look forward to working with them on bringing this inexpensive energy to members.”

“The draft air permit for Plant Washington failed to uphold protection for the citizens and environment of Georgia from toxic air pollution,” stated Ulla Reeves, regional program director for SACE. “We are pleased that the court ruled favorably to control toxic air pollution and we hope that Power4Georgians takes another big hint from this decision that coal is the wrong energy answer for our state.”

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About GreenLaw

GreenLaw is dedicated to preventing air and water pollution that endangers human health and degrades Georgia’s natural resources. GreenLaw achieves these goals by providing free high quality legal and technical assistance to environmental organizations and community groups throughout Georgia. www.green-law.org
<http://www.twitter.com/grrrlaw>

About the Southern Environmental Law Center

The Southern Environmental Law Center is the only regional nonprofit using the power of the law to protect the health and environment of the Southeast (Virginia, Tennessee, North and South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama). Founded in 1986, SELC's team of 40 legal experts represent more than 100 partner groups on issues of climate change and energy, air and water quality, forests, the coast and wetlands, transportation, and land use.

WEB: www.SouthernEnvironment.org

TWITTER: http://www.twitter.com/selc_org

About the Fall-line Alliance for a Clean Environment

Fall-line Alliance for a Clean Environment (FACE) is a grassroots organization committed to protecting the natural resources of Washington County and the surrounding area. <http://faceenvironment.org>

Twitter: [friends_of_FACE](https://twitter.com/friends_of_FACE)

About Ogeechee Riverkeeper

Ogeechee Riverkeeper (ORK) works with their members and supporters to protect the Ogeechee, Canoochee and coastal Georgia Rivers. www.ogeecheeriverkeeper.org

FACEBOOK: <http://www.facebook.com/ogeechee>

About Sierra Club

Sierra Club, the oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization in the United States, has over 20,000 members and supporters in the state of Georgia. www.sierraclub.org/coal

About the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy

Southern Alliance for Clean Energy is a not-for-profit, non-partisan organization working to promote responsible energy choices that solve global warming problems and ensure clean, safe, healthy communities throughout the Southeast. www.cleanenergy.org