NEW YORK’S CLEAN ENERGY FUTURE IN DOUBT

New York State has an opportunity to be a national renewable energy leader while cutting carbon pollution dramatically. The good news is that the state has set an ambitious target of reducing carbon pollution eighty percent by 2050. Some steps are taking us in the right direction, including the Governor’s pioneering statewide Renewing the Energy Vision Initiative to remake the utility sector, the Clean Energy Fund, as well as significant investments in solar energy. However, while the rest of the country is moving away from dirty, outdated coal, Governor Cuomo’s administration is actively giving it a bail out.

THE COST OF COAL

Not only is coal burning responsible for one third of U.S. carbon pollution—the main contributor to climate disruption—it is also making us sick, leading to as many as 13,000 premature deaths every year and more than $100 billion in annual health costs. Burning coal pollutes our air with smog, sulfur pollution and soot, and poisons our drinking water and streams with heavy metals including arsenic, mercury, and lead. The consequences of that pollution are borne disproportionately by the most vulnerable members of our society, including children, the elderly and low-income families.

DIRTY COAL IS RECEIVING EMPIRE SIZED BAILOUTS

Under Governor Cuomo’s administration, aging, unprofitable coal plants have received new life through unnecessary bailouts—and proposals have even been floated for some “zombie” coal plants to come out of retirement and burn dirty fuel again.

In December of 2013, Cuomo spearheaded a bailout deal that he claimed would convert the economically failing Dunkirk coal plant to gas, even though the switch would cost New York electricity customers several times more than proposed transmission upgrades, the most cost effective solution. Recently, the New York Public Service Commission approved that deal, which will cost electricity customers over $200 million. And, as if making such a major investment in any fossil fuel wasn’t already a bad idea, when looked at closer the plan is just another coal lifeline in disguise. Nothing prevents the plant from continuing with, or reverting to, burning coal 100% of the time

Right now, the Cayuga Coal Plant near Ithaca is vying for the same kind of bailout received by the Dunkirk plant. Public filings from the coal plant owner and the local utility demonstrate that a proposal to add gas burning

Coal Bailouts

• New York Electricity Customers Subsidizing Failing Coal:
  • Over $200 Million—Dunkirk
  • $155 Million Currently—Cayuga
  • Over $145 Million Additional Proposed—Cayuga
capabilities to keep the plant running would cost over a hundred million dollars more than equally effective transmission upgrades, while not prohibiting the plant from burning coal. That money would come straight out of the pockets of New York electricity customers. In 2012, the plant’s owners announced their intention to indefinitely close down because it is losing money by operating. Since then, however, it has been kept running by ongoing coal bailout subsidies from New York electricity customers, costing over $155 Million.

New York is also the only state considering bringing back coal plants from the grave once they have already been retired. Clean energy advocates successfully fought back against a proposal to bring the Mid-Hudson Valley Danskammer coal plant back online earlier this year, but now a new proposal is on the table to bring back the retired Greenidge coal plant on Seneca Lake.

**BAILOUTS DRAGGING NEW YORK BACKWARD**

These bailouts have set a harmful precedent for New York’s remaining coal plants. Governor Cuomo is sending the message that it’s ok to let taxpayers and electricity customers subsidize the continuation of these economically failing, polluting plants while power companies reap the profits.

Keeping these old, dirty coal-fired power plants on life support undermines both federal and state efforts to implement solutions that seek to solve global climate disruption, and ensure that coal will continue to have major negative consequences for public health. New York’s coal burning plants contribute an outsized share of our state’s carbon emissions at a time when transitioning off coal is a critical interim step needed to meet our ambitious goal of reducing carbon pollution state-wide by 80% percent in 2050. With new federal protections from carbon pollution like the Clean Power Plan about to be finalized this summer, coal bailouts are a resounding step in the wrong direction.

**STOP COAL BAILOUTS AND INVEST IN CLEAN ENERGY**

The actions of Governor Cuomo’s administration increase the cost of electricity for everyday New Yorkers and businesses, while locking us into decades of continued fossil fuel use. New York can and must do better. Governor Cuomo can renew our economy and create thousands of new jobs by committing our state to getting 50% of our energy from renewable sources by 2025, securing energy efficiency reductions of 20% by 2025, and committing to a 5,000MW offshore wind program. Governor Cuomo must also ensure that forward thinking economic and workforce development policies are implemented to protect communities transitioning away from coal.

Governor Cuomo: it’s time to lead on clean energy by ditching coal in New York! We need an immediate commitment to transitioning New York away from coal, ending this trend of coal bailouts, and doing so alongside responsible transition plans to support both plant workers and the tax base of affected communities.

**YOU CAN STOP COAL BAILOUTS:**

- Call, write or email Governor Cuomo and ask him to stop and reverse massive bailouts for aging coal plants, while showing national leadership by setting a new renewable energy standard of 50% by 2025 when the current policy runs out.
- Write a letter to the editor at your local newspaper calling for an end to coal bailouts, the need for new long term renewable energy and efficiency commitments, and a responsible transition plan for affected communities.
- If there are hearings in your community, attend and make your voice heard for fiscal responsibility and clean energy action.
- Join us! Contact David Alicea at david.alicea@sierraclub.org (Upstate New York) or Daniel Sherrell at dan.sherrell@sierraclub.org (New York City and Long Island)