Georgia policies have put our state on a path beyond coal to clean energy that protects our air, water, health and climate. But our work is not done!

Thirty two percent of Georgia Power’s production still comes from burning coal, which pollutes our air and water and is one of the largest sources of harmful climate-disruption causing carbon pollution. That’s why energy companies like Georgia Power must outline transition plans that continue to responsibly replace our coal-burning power plants with clean energy—especially wind, solar and energy efficiency.

Georgia will continue to build on the success of its burgeoning clean energy economy through its next long-term energy plan, which was approved by the Public Service Commission in July 2016. The plan adds new wind and solar to the state’s energy mix and takes important steps to bring achievable energy savings to low-income customers. The plan also protects Georgia Power customers by capping the amount of money the company can spend on older, more expensive coal plants like Plant Hammond in Floyd County.

By continuing to reduce our reliance on coal plants we all stand to benefit from improved air and water quality and lower electric bills. This is great news for our health and our wallets!

AGING COAL PLANTS LIKE HAMMOND ARE A COSTLY PROBLEM

Georgia Power has planned for the transition beyond coal at other plants in the state. Now, it’s time to plan for a similar transition at Plant Hammond, which will produce significant benefits for Georgia Power customers, Floyd County residents, and our environment.

Hammond is one of the state’s oldest coal-fired power plants. The plant has been running less and less over the last few years, and it’s getting increasingly expensive for Georgia Power customers. Since 2008, Georgia Power has spent $537 million to make improvements at Plant Hammond, which must be paid for whether the plant runs or not. The best way to pay this debt is for Georgia Power to use cheaper power sources, like wind and solar power, instead of doubling down on bad investments at Plant Hammond.

Recently adopted standards by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency could require Georgia Power to make these bad investments. For example, large power plants like Hammond will likely have to install cooling towers to reduce the amount of water it takes from the Coosa River.

It’s time to call on Georgia Power to harness the power of clean energy solutions for our community. The good news is clean energy solutions exist, and Georgia has a strong and growing clean energy economy that employs over 20,000 people today.

MOVING HAMMOND OFF OF COAL WILL:

- Reduce Georgians exposure to multi-million dollar costs to bring the plant’s operation in line with new public health and environmental protection standards;
- invest money in local projects that will save local families and businesses money, grow jobs and property values, and expand customers’ energy choices;
- Protect our community’s health and the environment from coal pollution, including groundwater contamination, respiratory illnesses such as asthma, and climate disruption caused by coal-fired greenhouse gases.
and the number of fish that are killed. Cooling towers could cost Georgia Power customers hundreds of millions of dollars. Georgia Power also has to comply with new federal Clean Water Act regulations requiring enhanced treatment of the pollutants carried by water used during coal burning.

Georgia Power can avoid the costly upgrades required to comply with these new standards by agreeing to phase out the plant’s four coal-fired units over time. Placing the units on a schedule for retirement will allow community leaders to work with Georgia Power and other interested parties to prepare for the transition away from coal.

GEORGIA POWER MUST PLAN FOR A PLANT HAMMOND TRANSITION NOW

Georgia Power must outline a transition plan, and can do so while ensuring a just outcome for all involved. For example, community partners, environmentalists, labor, utilities and the Governor reached an agreement to transition beyond coal at Washington’s TransAlta power plant, similar size to Plant Hammond, between 2020 and 2025. The planned phase-out provided job security and transition time for the workforce and a fund for local economic development which was important for community members. For more information, report.labor4sustainability.org

GROW THE CLEAN ENERGY ECONOMY IN NORTHWEST GEORGIA

As Georgia and the nation transition to a clean energy economy, let’s position Northwest Georgia to be a part of the solution. Clean energy jobs are on the rise in the region, but more can be done with a clear regional plan to grow good paying, family sustaining jobs in our communities.

Northwest Georgia is home to a skilled workforce and our state’s high quality universities and technical schools can help train workers for new jobs created by clean technologies. Georgia Power can also choose to repurpose the Plant Hammond site for solar energy, like the City of Holyoke did at the Mount Tom Power Station in Massachusetts. Installing solar power at Plant Hammond can help generate new property taxes and other revenue for the community.

Together, we can make a difference in our community. For more information or to get involved, contact Ian Karra at ian.karra@sierraclub.org or (404) 607-1262 ext. 233.

YOU’RE PART OF THE SOLUTION TOO!

Call on Georgia Power to work with regulators to outline a plan to phase out the use of coal at Plant Hammond over the next seven years and create local job opportunities while safeguarding our air and water from the effects of coal pollution.

• Submit a letter to us, and we’ll deliver them to Georgia Power and the PSC for you! Email ian.karra@sierraclub.org with “RePower Georgia” in the subject of your email or the top of your letter.

• Talk to your friends and neighbors, volunteer with the Sierra Club, or host a house party or community event to discuss the transition beyond coal to clean energy for Northwest Georgia.

• Look into energy efficiency, solar or other alternative energy options for your home or business.

• Go to www.sierraclub.org/georgia/ses/BeyondCoal for more information on our campaigns.