The Iowa Environmental Council's position on

COAL-FIRED POWER PLANTS

For much of the 20th Century, utilities met increasing demand for electricity by building coal-fired power plants.[1] During this period there was little understanding of how power plant pollutants such as mercury, sulfur dioxide and soot could affect human health and the environment. And until the late 1980s, there was little understanding of the impact of carbon dioxide emissions on the global climate.[2] Today, however, we understand these harms and are being urged by scientists to quickly move to reduce carbon dioxide emissions or face dire environmental consequences. Scientists say…

> "…the world will need to halt the growth of global warming in this decade, begin reducing emissions soon, and slash emissions by more than half by 2050."[3]

However, as of June 2006, utilities have approximately 150 new coal-fired plants on the drawing board in 42 states, including three in Iowa.[4] If these new coal-fired power plants are built, they will dramatically increase U.S. global warming pollution during this era when it is imperative we move in the opposite direction to deeply cut our emissions. Iowa currently produces 85% of its electricity from coal. If all three plants are built in Iowa, annual electricity-related carbon dioxide pollution in Iowa would increase 29% above 2003 levels[5].

Numerous local, state and national environmental groups, including many in the Midwest, are working to stop the 'coal rush' and move toward a clean energy future. There exist today better, cleaner alternatives to coal and other fossil fuels. According to the National PIRG, "An America that uses no more energy than it does today—and that relies on renewable sources for a large and growing share of that energy—is not a fantasy. It is a realistic, perhaps even conservative, goal that can be achieved using technologies and policy tools existing today."

Therefore, the Iowa Environmental Council will recommend, support and advocate for policies which:

- Discourage or limit the construction of new coal-fired plants in Iowa
- Support increased development of renewable power
- Retire a significant portion of Iowa coal-fired power plants run with old technologies
- Establish a limit on carbon dioxide pollution from power plants
- Ensure that all costs of coal-fired plants—including the public health costs of global warming and probable cost of additional pollution control requirements—are fully considered when utility permit and state investment decisions are made
- Increase energy efficiency and conservation, to reduce the demand and need for traditional coal-fired power plants
- Support research and development of the next generation of energy technologies
- Promote participation in the Iowa Green House Gas Registry

---

[1] Michael J. Mudd, American Electric Power, IGCC: *Pathway for a Future of Coal*, Presentation, 19 April 2005, Available from the Michigan Public Service Commission at www.cis.state.mi.us.

[2] Travis Madsen and Rob Sargent, Making Sense of the "Coal Rush": *The Consequences of Expanding America's Dependence on Coal*, U.S. PIRG Education Fund National Association of State PIRGs, July 2006.

[3] Malte Meinshausen, "What Does a 2 degree C Target Mean for Greenhouse Gas Concentrations? A Brief Analysis Based on Multi-Gas Emission Pathways and Several Climate Sensitivity Uncertainty Estimates," in Hans Joachim Schnellnhuber, ed., *Avoiding Dangerous Climate Change*, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

[4] Madsen, 2006.

[5] Madsen, 2006, Appendix A: Global Warming Impacts by State.

August 14, 2007