

UE-143214

Wyse, Lisa (UTC)

From: mary <mmcspo@yahoo.com>
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November 17, 2015

Steven V. King
Executive Director and Secretary
Utilities and Transportation Commission
State of Washington
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Director King:

Avista, the energy utility that serves me and other Eastern Washington customers, gets over 20% of its electricity from burning coal. Most of Avista's coal-fired electricity is coming from the massive polluting power plant called Colstrip, located out-of-state in Montana. Many here in Washington including myself were surprised to know that we still use a lot of coal power. I shutter to think that every time I turn on a light switch I am using that coal and contributing to polluting the Colstrip area, despite the fact that I am a participant in Avista's new community solar farm in the Spokane Valley.

Replacing coal with clean energy is one of the biggest steps Avista could take to reduce pollution and invest in Washington jobs. Right now Avista is conducting its 20-year planning process. State regulators have instructed Avista to take account of the costs of continued operations of Colstrip and to provide scenarios where Colstrip is not part of Avista generation resources. Those instructions have not been followed in the 2015 Integrated Resource Plan since the true cost of the clean-up of Colstrip, as well as other costly elements of continuing to operate an outdated, polluting plant have not been included. Had these costs been calculated and included the projected costs would have been significantly higher. It is time to discontinue investments in an old-fashioned dirty, dangerous and increasingly expensive out-of-state coal plant, and to develop a clean energy replacement plan that will provide good jobs for the region and a cleaner environment. Avista has abundant opportunities for clean, sustainable energy – wind, solar and energy efficiency—which is less costly given the true costs of dirty coal.

Avista's 2015 Integrated Resource Plan, while remaining heavily dependent on dirty coal from the Colstrip Generating Facility in Montana, also disregards recent recommendations from the Northwest Power and Conservation Council, which found that the Pacific Northwest can meet its future electricity needs without adding any new gas plants by using money-saving energy efficiency and demand response technologies.

Avista must choose whether to spend millions of dollars to control pollution at its aging, out-of-state coal plant or invest in clean energy for Washington's future. Clean-up of the coal ponds should begin now, and delaying it will only make the pollution worse. Avista must heed Governor Inslee's recently laid out climate plan for Washington – and getting off coal is a high priority in that climate plan.

To quote Jace Bylenga,

“Avista heavily promotes its commitment to our region's communities, which is why we're disappointed that their latest resource plan does nothing to reduce the climate pollution that's fueling forest fires and prolonged droughts across eastern Washington. Instead, Avista is doubling down on coal and gas, two dirty fuels that increase climate disruption. What's more, Avista is putting its customers at risk by ignoring the extensive liabilities of powering Washington with its outdated, increasingly expensive Colstrip coal plant.

If Avista truly wants to act in the interest of its customers, they need to go back to the drawing board and create a forward-thinking plan that invests in energy efficiency measures to lower customers' bills and create hundreds of in-state jobs. Avista needs to stop wasting tens of millions of dollars from business and family customers on out-of-state coal and start investing in our clean energy future right here in Washington.”

I urge the Commission to return the plan to Avista for a much needed revision, including an honest assessment of the cost of coal vs. the cost of more energy efficiency and green technologies. Such an honest assessment would yield a different energy mix. Twenty years is a long time and our environment and our communities can't wait that long.

Sincerely,

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