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October 13, 2013

Washington State Utilities and Transportation Commission
1300 S. Evergreen Park Drive, S.W.
Olympia, WA 98504-7250

COLSTRIP POWER PLANT, MONTANA
Docket #120767

2013 OCT 17 AM 8:55
COMMUNICATIONS SECTION
WASHINGTON STATE UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Dear Sirs,

Attached is a copy of an editorial I submitted recently to a few local newspapers. This editorial draws attention to the Colstrip Plant and the facts about PSE's continued use of the coal that is burned there. My goal was to encourage local people to write to you with their own opinions. Added to what was written, I would also like you to take some time for further considerations.

I believe it is tragic that most average people do not recognize or take the time to find out just exactly what burning coal for the last 200 years has done and is continuing to do to our planet. It is not just the scientists that need to know how our atmosphere is changing; everyone needs to take responsibility and become aware of the subtle ways that increasing CO2 in our thin atmosphere [which supports life on earth] is changing in ways that will cause untold weather havoc and resulting economic, health, and environmental chaos. The seemingly abrupt and severe weather events will be self-perpetuating because CO2 remains in the atmosphere and in the oceans for many decades. **Human beings have changed the equation for life on earth to remain stable as it has for the last 12,000 years.** We have done this more or less unconsciously, but the facts are now very clear and easy to access. Please take a moment to consider the following scenario:

We have now warmed the planet by about 1.8 degrees F. In the 1930's, it took only one degree F of temperature to cause the Dust bowl. Few people realize or understand that it is the oceans which regulate temperature. Scientists have been able to study the surface temperatures of the oceans over the last 100 years and have discovered that prior to the Dust Bowl event, the Pacific Ocean surface temperature cooled by one degree, while the Atlantic surface temperature increased by about the same amount. This slight change created atmospheric conditions that caused the drought in North America by disrupting the air currents in the lower atmosphere that bring rain to the Plains. This fast-moving air usually flows westward over the Gulf of Mexico where it sucks up moisture then swings Northward, dumping rain on the Great Plains. In 1932 the warmer Atlantic heated the air, made it lighter and less dense; as it rose, it allowed the cooler, higher-pressure air to sweep in off the continental U.S, pushing the wet air eastward over the Gulf. The cooler Pacific temps also interfered with the cycle by strengthening the summer high-pressure system that usually sits over the Great Plains and drove the stream of air farther south than normal. The air that returned was even drier. The interplay of these two currents reinforced each other and these conditions persisted for at least 6 years, creating the "perfect" storm that left the midwest and the great plains dry as pavement. The dust enhanced and prolonged the drought, which established a feedback loop. The worse it got, the worse it got. Because dust reflects sunlight and radiation, it blocks the sun's rays, leaving the ocean surface cooler and because the soil was dry, less moisture evaporated into the air, resulting in even less rainfall creating another negative feedback loop that made the drought worse.

It was this small temperature variation that caused a drought of such enormity and duration and underscores the earth's *sensitivity* and *vulnerability* to small movements in the thermometer; even a few 10^{ths} of a degree can make a big difference on what happens on the ground in terms of weather. The ecosystems of the earth are delicately calibrated, so that seemingly minor temperature changes can trigger chain reactions with long lasting consequences.

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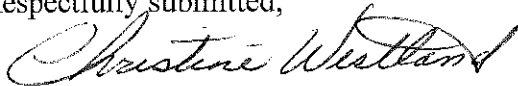
For the past 12,000 years civilization has flourished due to a relatively stable climate. Now we are on a threshold, moving quickly into transformational changes in weather caused by man's activities: burning more and more fossil fuels which is undeniably warming the earth. Climate change is already happening, but it will not continue to happen slowly and will hit hard. Climate is self-driving and once a system is changed, it continues to feed back on itself, becoming more intense until something changes the fundamental dynamic of that climate cycle.

The Colstrip Plant is one of many, unfortunately, but the wisest of us must begin to make better choices. We have already altered the atmosphere and therefore, climate patterns all over the world. We must recognize this and do everything we can to reverse the damage that has been created. To do otherwise is unforgivable.

It takes a certain amount of innate respect to bring a person to the point of appreciating and knowing the simple nature of the natural world and how it sustains life. You do not have to be a leading scientist to find out basic principles and realize how much we have damaged the earth, the water and the air, over the last 200 years by our short-sighted activities. You have only to read a little bit of information, which is readily available, to "get it", then to make a personal decision to try to make a difference. Predictions are now horrifying, but there is hope if we pay attention and care. Why would a person not care about poisoning the very thing that gives us life and gives it to us for free?

I urge you to look into the future; I urge you to take time to understand the simple science causing the earth to become warmer and warmer; I urge you to shut down the Colstrip Plant and begin immediately. Again, I urge the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission and personnel in PSE to start realizing what is in store for everyone's future if changes are not started and implemented immediately.

Respectfully submitted,



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COPY

EDITORIAL

Most people in Washington who pay Puget Sound Energy (PSE) for electricity don't know that PSE is the majority owner of the second largest coal plant in the Western U.S. - the Colstrip mine in Montana. Colstrip is the 8th largest polluter of CO² emissions in the U.S., emitting 17.1 million metric tons annually ⁽¹⁾. While PSE buys some power from the Centralia plant, (which will be phased out by 2025), they also import dirty coal-fired power from the Colstrip Plant in Montana, servicing over one million customers in the Puget Sound Region.

Whatcom County electricity is predominately sourced from PSE, therefore, we have the strongest voice in speaking out against the harm caused the Colstrip Plant. As ratepayers, Washington state law gives us the power to influence decisions made in the Integrated Resource Plan (IRP), which outlines plans for securing "reliable and cost effective energy" over the next 20 years and will be submitted to the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (WUTC). The WUTC has invited the public to comment on the IRP. Washington citizens have an opportunity to persuade them to choose a cleaner and more sustainable energy future. The deadline to submit letters and comments has now been extended through Friday, October 18, 2013.

PSE contributes a lot of money to the Colstrip plant attempting to make it marginally cleaner. Processing at the Colstrip Plant has created at least 800 acres of toxic coal ash waste ponds, which leak into groundwater, contaminating water supplies and destroying plants and animals, including cattle owned by local ranchers. Ratepayer money is also spent to pay settlements on the lawsuits brought by the people it's impacting. A better solution is to invest money on clean, sustainable energy sources instead.

With enough public input, PSE can influence the phasing out of the Colstrip plant and help begin a transition to production of cleaner, more sustainable sources of energy, creating more jobs that coal ever could. Andy Wappler, the VP for PSE Corporate affairs has said: "We know that the end point for coal is soon. We know that coal is a dead end." Using coal and other fossil fuels is an unrealistic way to conduct a vital business: silently polluting the oceans and atmosphere, compromising the air we breathe and ensuring an uncertain existence and/or shortened life span, ill health, and societal chaos for future generations. Please send comments by Friday, October 18th to: comments@utc.wa.gov.

⁽¹⁾ <http://meic.org/issues/montana-coal-facts/coal-plants-in-montana>

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