

Electric Power Integrated Resource Plans: Dirty Power, Dirty Money

By Louis Zeller

The Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League has filed a motion to intervene in the North Carolina Utilities Commission Integrated Resource Plans. IRPs are required to be filed by power companies to provide a long-range forecast of their operations. Together with NC WARN and Greenpeace, who filed similar petitions, we will present detailed information on the electric utilities' proposals for serving the state's power needs during the next 15 years. As we state in our petition, the IRPs are of vital importance in setting the future path of the utilities. Given the increasing costs and environmental problems associated with fossil-fuel and nuclear generation and the decreasing costs of energy efficiency and renewable energy, this path is clear to us. However, to the investor-owned utilities—Duke, Progress and Dominion—power translates to money and, as Frederick Douglass said, *power concedes nothing without a demand*.

Duke Energy's long-range forecast would have 82% of North Carolina's electric power provided by natural gas, nuclear and coal. Dominion would generate 85% with nuclear, natural gas and coal. Progress Energy would provide 89% with natural gas, nuclear, coal and oil. All three companies will reduce coal use but will increase natural gas by such a large amount that it will increase their global warming impacts. For example, during the next fifteen years, Dominion would actually increase its fossil fuel-generated electric energy output by 44%.

Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League opposes pollution-generating sources of power including hydrofracking, biomass, landfill gas, incineration of solid waste, poultry and hog manure, waste gasification, and nuclear. Support for fossil and nuclear power retards the growth of renewable energy sources such as solar and wind. Biomass and waste-powered plants present false solutions to global warming.

The costs of misguided energy decisions have been calculated and they are substantial. Continued reliance on outdated, polluting energy sources has huge public health costs which are borne by all of us. And although renewable forms of energy are growing, unnecessary and avoidable costs to society are incurred because of the failure of the utilities to introduce more renewable power sources sooner.

Finally, the general statutes of North Carolina which require the IRP analysis of the long-range need for electricity and least-cost considerations (NCGS 62-110 and 62-2) compel the Commission to require a full cost accounting of all electric generation sources. However, Duke Energy, Progress Energy and Dominion Energy are pursuing *most-cost* energy policies which are both expensive and reckless.■