



The following op-ed was submitted by ODEC in response to a *Virginian-Pilot* editorial published Oct. 20, 2009. The *Virginian-Pilot* published portions of this response, but omitted certain elements that ODEC thinks are important.

Opponents and proponents of coal-fired electricity generation can agree on one thing. To quote an October 20 *Virginian-Pilot* editorial, “For now, Americans need electricity generated from coal.” It accounts for about 50 percent of electricity generated and while that amount may be reduced over time, it will be very difficult to eliminate altogether, particularly in the immediate future.

But, as the editorial goes on to say, we also need better protections. In many cases, better protections are exactly what are built into new coal-fired power plant designs like the proposed Cypress Creek Power Station. Gone are the TVA-era design retention ponds used for storing combustion by-product (i.e., fly ash), like the type that spilled in Kingston, Tenn., last December. In their place are double-lined dry storage (i.e., spill- proof) landfills for combustion by-products specifically designed to prevent soil and/or water contamination.

The high-tech scrubbers at Cypress Creek Power Station will not only remove most air pollutants from emission, but they will convert all scrubbed emissions into solids that will also be stored in the dry storage landfill. Contrary to the editorial’s assertion, no scrubbed air emission will be converted into water pollutants, nor will scrubbed emissions end up in area streams and rivers.

Perhaps the most troubling part of the October 20 Op-Ed is the blanket acceptance of a report by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) that attempts to use the Clean Water Act to govern air emissions. This is what Congress and the previous administrations intended the Clean Air Act to do. Old Dominion Electric Cooperative (ODEC) has met and will continue to meet its legally mandated obligation to provide environmentally responsible, efficient and cost-effective electricity to the consumer-members of the not-for-profit electric distribution cooperatives that ODEC serves. Air emissions will comply with the Clean Air Act and water emissions will comply with the Clean Water Act.

ODEC is in the early stages of planning new electricity generation at the proposed Cypress Creek Power Station that will require more than 50 permits from local, state and federal regulatory bodies, which will, by law, protect the health of the population and the environment.

If the CBF’s radical interpretation of the Clean Water Act were used to govern air emissions, then all future business and job growth and expansion in the Greater Hampton Roads area would come to a complete and total standstill – including those planned by the military forces.

While energy efficiency efforts and increased deployment of renewable energy generation are part of solution, for the foreseeable future, coal is a necessary part of the fuel portfolio needed to meet Virginia’s growing energy needs.

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