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## VIRGINIANS FOR HEALTHY AIR

### One of Virginia's Most Harmful Pollution Sources Soon May Close

**F**or 12 years, clean air advocates have been fighting to close a coal-burning power plant in Old Town, Alexandria next to a popular biking and walking path along the George Washington Memorial Parkway. Now known as GenOn's Potomac River Generating Station, for years this facility has been the biggest single pollution source in metropolitan Washington, and has been fined repeatedly for exceeding pollution limits. Governor Mark Warner's administration closed the plant because of its chronic illegal emissions, but the Department of Energy intervened to reopen the plant. Because of its proximity to Reagan National Airport, the plant's smokestacks are comparatively short, resulting in its pollution having significant local impacts, especially on the health of local residents.

In 2008, the city of Alexandria and GenOn



reached a settlement agreement regarding the plant's continued violations of federal clean air laws. GenOn agreed to put \$34 million into an escrow account and use the money to reduce emissions. After spending \$2 million on equipment upgrades, GenOn decided to shut the plant down. The remaining \$32 million will be returned to GenOn once the plant closes, possibly as early as October 2012.

Members of the Virginians for Healthy Air Network will recall our successful efforts in

Virginia's General Assembly to protect the powers of the state Air Pollution Control Board (comprised of citizens appointed by the governor) to review and potentially strengthen air pollution permits approved by the state Department of Environmental Quality. The Air Board was involved in the closer review of the plant's operations, and the settlement agreement was announced at an Air Board meeting in Alexandria in March 2008.

Retiring this 62-year old plant will improve air quality and quality of life throughout the region. In late September, the regional power transmission organization certified that the GenOn plant could close without impacting reliability of the area's power grid, increasing the probability that it will shut down within the year. For updated information, see the city of Alexandria's website, <http://alexandriava.gov/GenOn>.

**Top:** Clean, clear air enhances fall colors in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Shenandoah National Park in Virginia. Many Virginia businesses that market scenic beauty and outdoor enjoyment work with NPCA to enforce and strengthen clean air policies. ©Sandy Jones/stockphoto. **Above:** The George Washington Memorial Parkway includes more than 20 different sites along the Potomac River in Virginia and Maryland. Local residents value the extensive paths for walking, jogging, and biking, as well as the views of the Potomac River and diverse plants and animals. ©Heather Blackwood.

## Poultry Waste Incinerator Again Threatens Rural Virginia

Located in Virginia's picturesque Shenandoah Valley, Stanley is a small town filled with natural beauty, friendly people, and nearby bed and breakfast inns for weekend escapes. The economy of Stanley and other towns in the region depend in part on tourism generated by the region's natural splendor, including Shenandoah National Park. Unfortunately, Stanley's—and the region's—economy and environment now are threatened by a proposed electric generating plant fueled by poultry litter.

Fibrowatt, an energy company based in Pennsylvania, first proposed building such a plant in Page County in 2010. After local citizens voiced concerns about the plant's

potential harm to the county's tourism-based economy and to human health, the Board of Supervisors voted against allowing the plant to locate there. Now, despite the serious and substantive concerns raised during the 2010 controversy, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality and the Department of Conservation and Recreation are looking at the Shenandoah Valley as a future location of a poultry waste-powered electric plant. Unfortunately, so far these agencies are not considering the full range of human health and community impacts of such a plant.

What to do with poultry waste poses a serious problem in the region. Excessive nitrogen and phosphorous in storm water runoff already

create major water pollution problems in streams and rivers flowing through communities and national parks throughout the Chesapeake watershed, and the Bay itself, so much so that in 2010 the EPA ordered Virginia and other states to reduce this pollution. However, burning poultry litter would release toxic air pollutants including arsenic, sulfuric acid, hydrochloric acid and hydrofluoric acids, and nitrogen oxide. Of particular concern, the copper, iron, and zinc present in poultry manure catalyze dioxin formation when incinerated. Dioxin is a known human carcinogen.

Citizens in Surry County and the Yadkin Valley in North Carolina opposed Fibrowatt when it tried to build incinerators there. In a press release regarding their decision, the Yadkin Valley, North Carolina Chamber of Commerce stated that they are "a pro-business organization, but [they] do not support any business that would have a negative impact on tourism, [their] citizens or the environment."

NPCA is opposed to siting a Fibrowatt plant here, and asks that all advocates of healthy air and clean water oppose it as well. Don't let Fibrowatt threaten Shenandoah Valley's tourism, citizens, environment, and economy. For more information on how to help, contact Pamela Goddard at 202.454.3365 or [pgoddard@npca.org](mailto:pgoddard@npca.org).

**Left:** A boat sails into harbor at sunset on an inlet of the Chesapeake Bay. Virginians for Healthy Air are concerned about air quality, and the reality is that air pollution can also lead to water pollution. Airborne nitrogen oxide pollution from smokestack emissions settling into the streams throughout the Chesapeake can feed low-oxygen dead zones. Mercury also poses a threat, as the neurotoxin accumulates in fish and other aquatic life (and ultimately the humans who eat them, with developing fetuses at most risk). By supporting clean air policies and funding, you are ultimately helping to keep the waters of Virginia clean and safe for ecosystems and outdoor recreation. ©Burwell and Burwell Photography/istockphoto



## Administration Abandons Rule to Protect Healthy Air

To the dismay of clean air advocates, a new rule to protect public health, forests, agricultural crops, park plants and animals, and other community values from the damaging effects of ozone pollution was shelved by the Obama administration in September. While multiple analyses since enactment of the federal Clean Air Act have revealed the financial benefits of clean air protections, the administration suggested erroneously that clean air measures could harm the economy, and delayed the rule for two more years.

In fact, implementation of clean air laws has

resulted in fewer worker sick days, increased crop yields, and business savings from improved processes, while dirty air has many costs. And Virginia's scenic beauty and outdoor recreational opportunities attract visitors who boost the state's economy. According to the Virginia Tourism Authority, tourism is big business in Virginia, supporting more than 200,000 jobs and providing \$18 billion in annual revenue statewide.

Harmful ground-level ozone forms when pollution from motor vehicles, power plants, industrial smokestacks, and other sources

"cook" in the presence of sunlight. Smog can cause or aggravate health problems including asthma and heart disease, and has been linked to premature death. Most vulnerable are pregnant women, children, seniors, and anyone who has existing heart or lung disease—roughly one-third of the population.

A critically important way members of the Virginians for Healthy Air Network can help protect Virginia from more ozone pollution is to weigh in against the proposed Cypress Creek power plant near Hampton Roads. See the related story for suggestions on how to help.

## Proposed Cypress Creek Power Plant Remains a Threat to Healthy Air



In December 2008, Old Dominion Electric Cooperative (ODEC) applied for a state permit to build a huge coal-fired power plant in a rural county near Hampton Roads. As proposed, this plant would be three times larger than the average coal plant, would emit pollution that harms human health, and would degrade air quality in nearby national parks such as Petersburg National Battlefield and Colonial National Historical Park. Of particular interest in the Hampton Roads area, the plant would add to the region's smoggy ozone pollution, potentially making it more difficult for new businesses to locate there. Finally, nitrogen pollution from power plants is not regulated regarding the harm it causes to area streams and treasures like the Chesapeake Bay. Pollution from Cypress Creek would make even more difficult the challenge of restoring area waters to be swimmable and fishable. Facing strong community opposition, ODEC withdrew its applications last fall but is expected to reapply next year for permits to build the plant.

NPCA is asking our Virginians for Healthy Air members and local community leaders to help stop the proposed power plant. We are asking city councils and county boards of supervisors to pass resolutions asking ODEC not to build this unnecessary plant. We encourage business owners who market Virginia's scenic beauty, outdoor recreational opportunities, and healthy lifestyles to write letters to these leaders and to Governor Robert McDonnell asking them to oppose the plant. You can send a letter to Governor McDonnell by visiting our website at [www.npca.org/mid\\_atlantic/protectchamptonroads](http://www.npca.org/mid_atlantic/protectchamptonroads). Community leaders like you can also write letters to the editor and otherwise raise concerns about this proposed 1500 mega-watt coal-burning power plant.

To watch our video and get more information including a map of the plant's proposed location, visit [http://www.npca.org/mid\\_atlantic/protectchamptonroads](http://www.npca.org/mid_atlantic/protectchamptonroads). For more information about how to help, contact Pamela Goddard at 202.454.3365 or [pgoddard@npca.org](mailto:pgoddard@npca.org).

Virginia already ranks sixth in the nation in premature deaths from air pollution, and emissions from this plant would challenge the Hampton Roads region's ability to meet federal clean air standards.

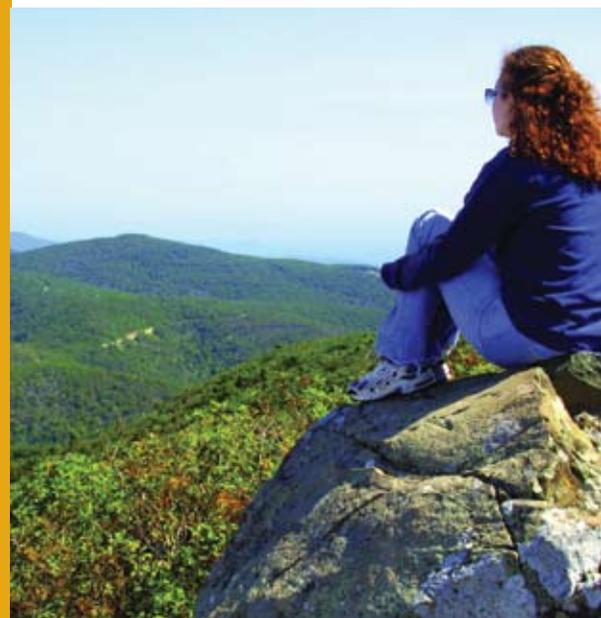
## Congratulations, Shenandoah National Park!

Shenandoah National Park is working to build the park's resilience in the face of climate change, to be more energy efficient and sustainable, and to be a leader and role model for organizations across the nation in implementing more climate-friendly practices. Doing so will not only help protect natural resources, but also will help reduce the park's operating costs, always a key concern and even more so with today's budget challenges. In September, park staff assembled a diverse group in Luray, including NPCA's Christa Cherava, Clean Air & Climate Program Analyst and Natalie Ramirez, Mid-Atlantic Regional Senior Program Coordinator, to provide perspectives and input into the park's Sustainability Action Plan.

And this plan isn't just sitting on the shelf. Shenandoah already has begun to incorporate climate-friendly parks objectives directly into its operating plans and systems. We are excited to see Shenandoah join Wolf Trap and several other national parks in the region in this innovative and air-pollution-reducing program. Bravo!

For more information on the National Park Service's voluntary Climate Friendly Parks Program, visit [www.nps.gov/climatefriendly-parks](http://www.nps.gov/climatefriendly-parks). For tips on how you can make your home or business more energy-efficient, go to [www.energysavers.gov](http://www.energysavers.gov).

**Top (left):** A park ranger gives a presentation at Historic Jamestown, part of Colonial National Historical Park, an anchor of the area's identity and a steady economic engine. The park's air quality will be degraded if the Cypress Creek Power Plant is built. Defending healthy air in Virginia needs to be a top priority as Virginia already ranks sixth in the nation in premature deaths from air pollution. ©Natalie Ramirez/NPCA. **Below:** A park visitor enjoys the beautiful views at Shenandoah National Park, a recent addition to the National Park Service's Climate Friendly Parks Program. ©John F. Mitchell/NPS.





**NPCA is leading state-by-state efforts to enforce the federal Clean Air Act's Regional Haze Rule to reduce emissions from coal-fired power plants.**

## Air Quality Briefs

- Dominion Virginia Power recently announced it may close its coal-fired power plant near the Elizabeth River by 2016. The Chesapeake Energy Center has four coal-fired units that produce pollution that threatens human health, and contributes to pollution in area streams and the Chesapeake Bay. The company stated that its ultimate decision hinges on final federal clean air and water rules then under development. Since Dominion's announcement, the Obama administration announced it would delay implementation of a rule to protect human health and natural resources by reducing pollution from sources like the Chesapeake Energy Center (see related story on the ozone rule delay).
- Dominion Virginia gained approval in December 2010 for a new gas-fired power plant in Warren County fewer than five miles from Shenandoah National Park. The National Park Service, NPCA and

members of the Virginians for Healthy Air Network raised concerns about building a power plant on the doorstep of a national park already struggling with poor air quality. Ultimately, Dominion agreed to close its 74-megawatt North Branch power station in Bayard, WV, when the Warren County facility opens, among other measures to reduce pollution in the region. Many businesses first joined the Virginians for Healthy Air Network during NPCA's 2002-3 campaign with Piedmont Environmental Council to stop the CPV-Warren plant originally proposed on this site. That campaign resulted in the state Air Board requiring the CPV-Warren plant to reduce its emissions beyond the requirements of the permit approved by the Department of Environmental Quality. Dominion acquired the Warren County project from CPV in 2008, and now plans to build three combustion turbines and a steam turbine, totaling 1300 megawatts, expected to begin operations by late 2014 or early 2015. Concerns remain about the suitability of locating a large new power so near a national park and areas with great historic and cultural significance.

## Colonial National Historical Park Enhances Economic Vitality

The third in our series, this new Making Connections report demonstrates the pivotal role Colonial National Historical Park plays to enhance the economic base of the Historic Triangle in Virginia (Jamestown, Yorktown and Williamsburg). Colonial National Historical Park serves not only as an important destination for visitors but as a connection between the public and private sites in the region that preserve and interpret America's history. The report identifies issues and opportunities that could affect the future of the park and the surrounding communities, including the negative impacts of a proposed coal-fired power plant, and the positive potential of a proposed new national monument at Fort Monroe in Hampton. To read this and the Making Connections reports for Shenandoah and Fredericksburg battlefield, visit [www.npca.org/mid\\_atlantic/connections/](http://www.npca.org/mid_atlantic/connections/). If you would like a copy of any or all of these reports mailed to you, please contact Pamela Goddard at [pgoddard@npca.org](mailto:pgoddard@npca.org) or Natalie Ramirez at [nramirez@npca.org](mailto:nramirez@npca.org).

- NPCA is leading state-by-state efforts to enforce the federal Clean Air Act's Regional Haze Rule to reduce emissions from coal-fired power plants. The rule requires state and federal agencies to work together to improve visibility in 156 national parks and wilderness areas. In addition to advocating that states and EPA approve effective plans to reduce haze pollution, we are deploying legal, grassroots, and media strategies to support our challenges to weak haze cleanup plans. Shenandoah National Park suffers from hazy skies that can reduce scenic views to just a few miles. Enforcement of existing clean air protections will increase visitor enjoyment and support local businesses that market scenic beauty and outdoor enjoyment at national parks and their neighboring communities across the country, and reduce threats to human health.

**Top:** The only clear thing about regional haze is how it impairs visibility, as seen above at Shaver Hollow in Shenandoah National Park. According to the National Park Service, average visual range in national parks in the eastern United States has decreased from 90 miles to 15-25 miles. ©NPS

## CONTACT US

Virginians for Healthy Air is a network of Virginia businesses, civic groups, and nonprofit organizations that share the vision of healthy air for the Commonwealth and for Virginia's national parks, including Shenandoah, the largest national park in Virginia, established for its beautiful scenic views.

Members of the Virginians for Healthy Air network currently include bed and breakfasts, wineries, summer camps, and other local businesses from across the state.

We appreciate all of the members of our Virginians for Healthy Air (VHA) Network!

Look for your organization online at [www.npca.org/mid\\_atlantic/vha\\_links/](http://www.npca.org/mid_atlantic/vha_links/).

Want to join VHA? Need to update your listing? Visit [www.npca.org/mid\\_atlantic/vha.html](http://www.npca.org/mid_atlantic/vha.html), or contact Natalie Ramirez.

For more information on the VHA network, visit [www.npca.org/mid\\_atlantic/vha\\_issues.html](http://www.npca.org/mid_atlantic/vha_issues.html), or contact Pamela or Natalie.

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