

Longview is not a done deal—many concerns remain

July 29, 2004

Members of the Citizens for Alternatives to Longview Power (CALP, www.nolongview.org), a local citizens group, spoke out today in response to the announcement by the Sierra Club, Trout Unlimited and the National Parks Conservation Association of a settlement of their appeal of the proposed facility's air permit. "CALP wants the public to understand that the recently announced settlement between Longview and the environmental groups ignores many important problems. It doesn't even address all of the air quality issues." said Bill Wonderlin. "This power plant is not a done deal. It's important that people understand that the appeal that was settled was only one of several pending legal actions, including another appeal of the same permit filed by Jarrett Jamison of Fort Martin, which is still pending."

According to Jamison, a long time resident of Fort Martin: "The historic community of Fort Martin will continue to vigorously oppose the proposed power plant. Fort Martin will pay an especially high price. Placing a second plant in Ft. Martin is a great injustice, generating noise beyond any reasonable level, destroying historic elements of the community, and lowering property values." Nearby areas, such as Bakers Ridge and Hoard, are also at a high risk, as are students and staff at the new University High School, to be built just across the river. According to Wonderlin, "Although Ft. Martin and neighboring areas will bear the brunt of Longview's effects, the harmful impact of Longview on our health, quality of life, and economy will be felt across a much broader region."

Longview must still obtain approval from the West Virginia Public Service Commission (PSC), which will make its decision before August 27th. Here are some other issues CALP wants the public and the PSC to consider:

- The American Lung Association has given Monongalia County a grade of "D" for ozone and particulate pollution, an indicator of how bad the air quality has become in this area. Monongalia County already has two dirty power plants. Seven are located within a 28-mile radius of Morgantown.

- Building Longview will NOT close the Ft. Martin power plant. The pollution from Longview will be added to the high load of pollutants already released from Ft. Martin. Allegheny Energy has told the Public Service Commission that if Longview decreases the power generated by Ft. Martin, Monongalia County consumers will pay more for their electricity.
- The unfair pollution burden carried by Monongalia County means more health problems and higher health care costs for everybody. West Virginia has the highest per capita rate of premature death caused by power plant emissions, according to the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) data detailed in the recently released Clear the Air Report (www.cleartheair.org/dirtypower).
- The EPA announced last month that Mon County is already in violation of clean air standards for fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}), a deadly class of pollutants linked to heart disease and asthma, but not addressed by the settlement <http://www.epa.gov/pmdesignations/regions/region3.htm#docs>.
- West Virginia already has the third-highest rate of diagnosed asthma in the nation, and according to the West Virginia Lung Association, 31,000 children in West Virginia suffer from asthma. Candace Jordan joined CALP because she is worried about the effect of Longview on children. “I am here because of all of my friends’ babies. I am concerned about children, and it is irresponsible and short-sighted to build Longview and make them breathe this garbage.”
- Mercury released when coal is burned contaminates the air we breathe and the water we drink, but the settlement does nothing to decrease the amount of mercury released by Longview. Even small amounts of mercury can have devastating effects on our health, affecting the development of the brain in fetuses, babies and children and producing behavioral impairments that last a lifetime.
- Longview could be dangerous in many ways. For example, Longview has no plan for responding to a spill of the hazardous chemicals that it will store, such as ammonia.
- A hidden cost of Longview is in jeopardizing the future economic development of Monongalia County. Poor air quality and the negative visual impact of the towering stack might discourage businesses from locating here. Failure to maintain federal clean air standards for ozone or particulates will decrease federal funding for building roads. It is also likely to lead to auto emissions testing and additional expenses for drivers, who must maintain their vehicles at specific emissions standards.

- Outdoor recreation in West Virginia is already being compromised by a constant haze that obscures the view in many areas. Longview will add to this problem, potentially decreasing revenues from recreation.
- The effects of coal-fired power plants such as Longview extend far beyond the local community. These power plants emit tremendous amounts of carbon dioxide, the primary cause of global climate change. Longview cannot control its release of carbon dioxide, and it will add to global warming. Mary Wildfire, another CALP member, was not impressed with the reductions in air pollution won by the settlement. "Even if it's much less pollution than dirty old plants like Fort Martin," said Wildfire, "it's still adding pollutants to air already loaded with the exhaust of the country's greatest concentration of power plants."
- Longview will also negatively affect residents in neighboring Pennsylvania, who have had little or no opportunity to voice their concerns. Dennis Groce, a resident of Point Marion, PA, represented the views of many of these people when he said: "As a Pennsylvania resident, I am saddened that residents of West Virginia and their elected and appointed leaders are trying to place yet another power plant less than 2 miles from my community of Point Marion. Point Marion has suffered the excessive emissions of the Fort Martin Power Plant for 35 years. Now, with that plant still operating and not scheduled to stop, West Virginia wants to build yet another power plant in almost the same location."
- The air permit settlement has lead Paula Hunt, another CALP member, to question the credibility of Longview officials. "These officials previously told us that they were offering the best possible package, only to admit, through this settlement, that the proposal could be improved. Are there other improvements that could be made?"
- The air permit settlement does not guarantee the protection of our air quality. Enforcement of the emissions levels in the settlement rests on the shoulders of the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection. Linda Shuster, a member of CALP, questioned whether the public could count on the WV DEP to do its job. According to data from the US EPA, the West Virginia DEP has a poor track record of enforcing permits when they are violated, and they have failed to pursue ANY action in the majority of cases. If Longview violates the conditions of its permit, the citizens of Monongalia County will have to sue the DEP to enforce the permit. This will be yet another cost to our citizens.

There is still time to stop this social, economic, and environmental injustice. This area does not need another coal-fired power plant. Please write to the WV Public Service Commission (PSC) as soon as possible and ask that the PSC not award Longview a siting certificate. For more information on contacting the PSC, log onto www.nolongview.org