

Coal Pollution Proposal "Falls Short" for Washington Only Coal-Fired Power Plant

Local News

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OLYMPIA, Wash. - Health groups and environmental advocates are giving a big thumbs down to proposed pollution standards being offered by the Gregoire administration for Washington State's only coal-fired power plant. The Washington Department of Ecology says the proposed agreement will reduce nitrogen oxides pollution by 20 percent. Department spokespeople also claim that reductions will be made in mercury pollution. Both claims are being disputed, says Ethan Bergerson, associate regional representative for the *Sierra Club*.

"The agreement mentions some of the pollutants from the coal plant, but it doesn't come up with a solid plan to reduce them - and it doesn't mention the coal plant's biggest pollution, which is global warming."

The Department of Ecology says the agreement will lead to real improvements in visibility, but Bergerson disagrees. He says nitrogen oxides are the source for the haze that is damaging 12 wilderness areas in Washington State - more wilderness areas affected by coal pollution than in any other state.

Cherie Eicholz, executive director of *Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility*, is concerned about how the proposed standards will affect children. She says the mercury standards fall very short of what is needed.

"Kids' systems are much, much more vulnerable than adult systems are. When we are talking about mercury, we are talking about nervous systems and immune systems - we're talking about problems that could last a lifetime."

The Department of Ecology has scheduled one public hearing, to be held Oct. 13 at Department of Ecology headquarters. Advocates say more hearings should be held, so people all across the state can have their say.

The public hearing is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. on Oct. 13 at Department of Ecology headquarters,

300 Desmond Drive SE, Lacey, Wash. The state also is accepting written comments until early November.