

MAPLE Coalition Opposes GenOn Pollution Lawsuit to Protect Public Health over Corporate Profit

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Protecting Public Health over Corporate Profit

MAPLE Coalition Opposes GenOn Pollution Lawsuit

Portland, PA - On January 6th, GenOn Energy, owner of the Portland Generating Station, filed a petition against the Environmental Protection Agency asking for a review of the EPA's decision to limit sulfur dioxide pollution from the Portland coal-fired power plant. The Multi-State Alliance to Promote Lasting Energy (MAPLE) opposes GenOn's petition to allow the Portland coal plant to continue polluting the air and water of Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

The State of New Jersey filed a petition with the EPA which would prevent the Portland plant from releasing pollution, including sulfur dioxide, nitrous oxides and mercury, into New Jersey's air and water. Pollution from coal-fired power plants causes respiratory illnesses, heart attacks, asthma, cancer and neurological disorders. Last year the EPA granted New Jersey's Section 126 petition under the Clean Air Act. This decision was the first granted by the EPA to limit pollution from a single-source emitter. "The GenOn coal plant in Portland is one of the dirtiest and oldest in the country. The EPA acted to save lives in both New Jersey and Pennsylvania, but GenOn's suit threatens to put people at risk. GenOn is once again putting profits about public health by filing this lawsuit," said Christine Guhl, Sierra Club Field Organizer.

The EPA held a hearing on New Jersey's petition in April of 2011. At that hearing, the MAPLE coalition joined public health advocates and members of the community to call on the EPA for a strong ruling which would protect public health. The final rule, announced in October, allows GenOn three years to comply with an 81% reduction in sulfur dioxide pollution. There are additional interim requirements that must be met before that deadline.

GenOn is opposing the interim pollution limits of the EPA's decision, which require that the Portland coal plant reduce its sulfur dioxide emissions by 50% within the first year. "The interim limits are a critical step in protecting the communities of this region. The pollution from the Portland plant has been making people sick for far too long," said Katie Feeney, Clean Air Council Policy Analyst.

In order to meet the 50% reduction target, GenOn has run tests on low sulfur coal. The company claims that those tests indicate burning low-sulfur coal is not a viable option for meeting that limit. "This lawsuit is about GenOn's bottom line. Low-sulfur coal is more expensive and GenOn is more concerned about making money than it is about the people living near the Portland coal plant," said Myriam Fallon, Greenpeace Field Organizer.

MAPLE is an alliance of environmental and public health organizations dedicated to protecting the health of our families by promoting clean energy solutions and the responsible retirement of polluting fossil fuel generation. MAPLE is composed of Clean Air Council, Greenpeace, the Sierra Club and the Delaware Riverkeeper Network.