

City Council, January 18, 2011

Good afternoon, thank you for the opportunity to talk with you this afternoon about the proposed Cypress Creek Coal Power Plant. I am Karen Forget, the Executive Director of Lynnhaven River NOW, and our Executive Committee has taken a position in opposition to the proposed coal fired power plant in Surry County.

As you know, Lynnhaven River NOW's responsibility is stewardship of our waterways in Virginia Beach. Excess nutrients, nitrogen and phosphorus, is one of our most stubborn challenges. Each year, despite our efforts, nutrient levels stay at destructive levels. You have a copy of our most recent State of the River report documenting the high nutrient levels.

Nitrogen stimulates algae growth which clouds the water and impedes the growth of underwater grasses; it increases the potential for a dangerous algae bloom and, through eutrophication, it increases the bacteria levels in the water and reduces dissolved oxygen. Excess nitrogen detrimentally affects 4 very important indicators of health in the river---water clarity, dissolved oxygen levels and bacteria levels and underwater grasses.

Currently, the primary source of nitrogen is lawn fertilizer, but the second largest source is air deposition which accounts for about 1/3 of the nitrogen. The potential nitrogen deposition from this power plant could undo any progress we can hope to make in reducing our nitrogen levels. In addition, there is the possibility of introducing mercury and other toxins to our water that are currently not present. For these reasons, Lynnhaven River NOW has concluded that we must, as stewards of our waterways, oppose the proposed coal plant.

We have with us this afternoon, two gentlemen, Cale Jaffe and Bob Burnley, who are much more knowledgeable than I am on the details of the proposal. They will address not only the environmental impacts of the proposed plant but also the economic impacts for Hampton Roads.

Cale Jaffe is a senior lawyer with the Southern Environmental Law Center and Bob Burnley is a former Director of Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality.

Thank you again for the opportunity to talk with you this afternoon. I hope that you will vote to accept the report from the Mayor's Energy Task Force in its entirety including opposition to the Cypress Creek plant. We have the opportunity to be leaders on this issue that is so important to all of Hampton Roads.