



**SNAKE RIVER
ALLIANCE**
IDAHO'S NUCLEAR WATCHDOG & CLEAN ENERGY ADVOCATE

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Snake River Alliance: EPA Clean Power Plan a Huge Step in Fighting Climate Change

Idaho Must Show Leadership by Reducing Reliance on Out-of-State Coal Plants

BOISE – Changes in the final version of President Obama’s Clean Power Plan will make it easier for Idaho to comply with the plan’s goals to reduce climate-changing greenhouse emissions, the Snake River Alliance said Monday.

“It’s clear that the Obama Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency listened to the concerns of states like Idaho that the Clean Power Plan as drafted posed difficult deadlines for states like Idaho writing greenhouse gas reduction plans,” said Alliance Clean Energy Program Director Ken Miller. “Idaho and all other states now have an extra year to prepare compliance plans and two extra years to begin implementing them. But we in Idaho still have some heavy lifting ahead to do our share in tackling emissions from coal-fired power plants.”

The Clean Power Plan rolled out Monday is one of the most sweeping and complex environmental programs ever, calling for a reduction of carbon dioxide pollution from coal plants by about one-third of 2005 levels by 2030. The new target is slightly higher than proposed in the draft plan. Each state has been assigned specific reduction targets, some higher than others and depending on the amount of emissions attributable to each state. Idaho’s is slightly higher than 30 percent from 2005 levels by 2030. The Plan is an offshoot of the landmark 1970 Clean Air Act and its “Rule 111(d)” that will crack down for the first time on the last remaining major source of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions. This is the most important single step the federal government can take to slow the steamrolling trend toward irreversible climate change and the impacts already under way in Idaho and elsewhere.

Idaho is in the unusual position of relying on coal generation for about 40 percent of its electricity, although it has no coal plants. All of the coal plants generating power for Idaho are in neighboring states. Nonetheless, the Alliance said in its comments to the EPA (one of 4.3 million comments received) that Idahoans still bear some responsibility for those emissions in other states and that those states should

not shoulder all responsibility for coal power consumed in other states. The Alliance also took issue with claims by the coal industry and many Idaho policy-makers that the plan to reduce life-threatening emissions from coal plants is too expensive and burdensome.

“There’s no question there will be costs in accelerating the retirement of coal plants nationwide,” Miller said. “But for Idaho, those costs will be more than offset through reduced electricity bills and the addition of new jobs and economic activity as Idaho stops exporting our energy dollars to other states in exchange for a new clean energy economy with expanded renewable energy and energy conservation investments.” For instance, in 2014, about 1,000 Idahoans were employed in the wind and solar industries.

In an Idaho fact sheet on the Clean Power Plan, the White House notes that 8.5 percent of Idaho’s adult population suffers from asthma, made worse by coal plant emissions. It also said Idaho’s carbon pollution equals the yearly pollution from 40,000 cars. Examples of climate change impacts in Idaho include changes in the timing of stream flow due to changing snowmelt; changes to Northwest forests, including greater wildfire risk and insect and tree disease outbreaks; reduced availability of water for irrigation in snowmelt-fed basins; and for tribes, reduced access to traditional foods and other water-related challenges.

The Alliance also points out that Idaho Power and other electric utilities serving Idahoans are already beginning to plan to reduce their reliance on coal, joining utilities nationwide that are retiring their coal plants ahead of time to reduce the soaring costs of meeting tougher environmental regulations.

The additional time EPA is giving states like Idaho will not only give states more leeway in setting their “glide path” to meet reduction goals, but it will also reduce the temptation to quickly add new natural gas plants to replace the more expensive coal. That, in turn, will lead instead to more clean energy investments. The plan also contains a Clean Energy Incentive Program to reward early investments in renewable energy. While it removes the energy efficiency “building block” as one of the four ways states can use to plan compliance, energy efficiency remains crucial for states like Idaho to meet their targets.

States like Idaho must file their initial compliance plans by September 2016, but can seek an extension to September 2018. States then have 15 years to meet their final goals by 2030. States can also voluntarily partner to file regional plans addressing region-wide greenhouse gas reduction goals. It’s not known yet whether Idaho will choose that option.

“Idaho will soon begin months of planning how to comply with this plan, and the Alliance is eager to join the state and other stakeholders in that process,” Miller said. “This is a historic moment toward reducing the threat of climate change and it’s the biggest and most tangible step we can take right now to address climate change.” Miller said the Alliance was relieved that, despite strong objections by Idaho leaders to the plan when the draft was released, Idaho is not among the more than a dozen states threatening to sue EPA over the plan or refusing to prepare plans to comply with it. “States can refuse to write their own plans,” Miller said. “In those cases, EPA will write the plans for the states.”

The Snake River Alliance works for responsible solutions to nuclear waste and a nuclear-free future. It seeks to strengthen Idaho's economy and communities through the implementation of renewable energy sources in Idaho and the promotion of energy efficiency and conservation.

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