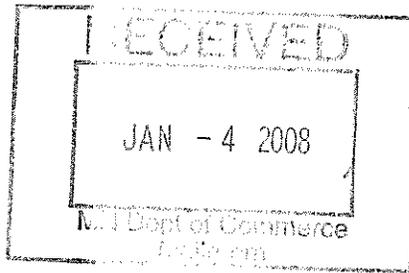


December 19, 2007

Re: Coal Gasification Plant

Mr. Bill Storm
Minnesota Department of Commerce
85 7th Place East, Suite 500
St. Paul, MN 55101



Dear Mr. Storm:

I am writing this letter to you to inform you about my concerns regarding a coal gasification plant that is being proposed for construction in Itasca County, Minnesota, and the Departmental Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) that was written about this project. This letter also serves as an educational project assigned to me through an Environmental Science class that I am taking at Itasca Community College.

First of all, I found it difficult to read and comprehend the DEIS as it contains very technical and regulatory terminology that is confusing. In Chapter 4 of this DEIS, you stated that mercury levels in the lakes would stay below the total allowable limits. However, you did not mention the current status of mercury levels in lakes that are located near the plant's proposed construction site, nor did you give a projection of the potential increase in mercury levels that will be emitted once the plant becomes operational.

Mercury contamination is accumulated and stored in the muscle tissue of fish and wildlife that are exposed to it either through direct consumption or that which is absorbed through the skin. This poses a significant health risks to pregnant women, small children, elderly populations, people with immune deficiency disorders, and indigenous populations who consume large quantities on these dietary staples.

With 1,000's of lakes under mercury advisories and warnings, Minnesota's economy is also at risk due to a decline in tourism—one of the state's primary industries. In addition to being a prime vacation destination, Minnesota (especially the northern quadrant) attracts hunters and fish enthusiasts across the United States. Resort owners in Minnesota have already been negatively impact by the growing number of fish advisories, and some have had to close their businesses since many of their out-of-state customers have chose to go elsewhere.

The DEIS did not include any information about the possible long-term environmental affects of storing waste by-products that will be generated from this plant. Even with state-of-the-art leachate collection equipment and liners, I believe that Minnesota's harsh winters pose a risk for breakage and leakage to underground storage containers, thereby degrading soil and groundwater supplies. Lastly, in constructing the plant and its pipelines, home owners are being displaced in what amounts to property "takings" by the company proposing this plant. While this project is seductive to economically-challenged communities that are looking for employment opportunities; I believe the environmental impacts and human health risks far outweigh the handful of jobs this plant promises to supply.

Sincerely,

Meagan Wichterman
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