



Fact Sheet

U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service Natural Resource Information Division



Centralia Power Plant Example of Collaborative Decision Making

December 1996

Background

Research and monitoring revealed that air pollution is impairing visibility in Mount Rainier National Park in Washington. The data suggest that sulfur dioxide (SO₂) emissions from the Centralia Power Plant, located approximately 50 km west of the park, may cause or contribute to this impairment. Therefore, under Section 169A of the Clean Air Act (42 U.S.C. 7401-7671q [as amended in 1990], 91 Stat. 685, Pub. L. 101-549), the plant is a candidate for Best Available Retrofit Technology (BART) to reduce SO₂ emissions.

The plant burns high sulfur coal from an adjacent mine, does not currently employ SO₂ control equipment, and emits approximately 69,000 tons per year of SO₂. (Note: Because of concerns with visibility in Grand Canyon National Park, the Navajo Generating Station in Arizona is currently installing SO₂ controls in accordance with Section 169A of the Clean Air Act, subsequent to which time the Centralia Plant would be the largest source of SO₂ emissions in the western United States.) Emissions from the Centralia Power Plant also contribute to acid deposition, which harms sensitive alpine lakes in Mount Rainier National Park and in other wilderness areas in the Northwest. Visibility and lake resources are also impaired by air pollution from other sources in the region, including those in the Puget Sound area.

Current Status

The Centralia Power Plant is subject to a Washington state law that requires the use of Reasonably Available Control Technology (RACT). Staff of the National Park Service believe the RACT order adopted on 25 August 1995 by the Southwest [Washington] Air Pollution Control Authority (SWAPCA) for the Centralia Power Plant, which allows the plant to emit 55,000 tons of SO₂ per year, is not sufficient to protect Class I area resources. The National Park Service provided comprehensive comments on the draft RACT analysis in February 1995 and on the proposed regulatory order in early August, initiated a meeting with PacifiCorp--one of the owners of the power plant--on 7 August, and presented testimony before the SWAPCA Board of Directors meeting on 15 August. After SWAPCA issued its RACT order, the owners of the power plant and the National Park Service agreed to explore options for obtaining additional decreases in emissions. The first meeting was held in January 1996 and was attended by representatives of the National Park Service, PacifiCorp, other owners of the plant, the Washington Department of Ecology, the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U. S. Forest Service, and local regulatory agencies. Meetings have been held monthly since then. The meetings focused on confidential business information, technical proposals, and creative ways to finance the increased controls. The goal

of the negotiations is the identification of SO₂ control options for the plant that will satisfy Federal Land Manager concerns and are economically feasible for PacifiCorp. The participants hope that the negotiations will identify a solution that is comparable or even better than the regulatory options under the Clean Air Act, i.e., BART.

To address air pollution from other sources, the state of Washington will review its Visibility State Implementation Plan in a separate process. Northwest Environmental Advocates, an environmental group in Portland, Oregon, filed lawsuits against the regulators for failure to adopt an adequate visibility plan and for failure to require adequate controls at the Centralia power plant. This is providing an incentive for successful and timely negotiations. The Federal Land Managers and PacifiCorp agreed to complete the negotiations by 31 March 1997 and to have controls installed by 2002. The negotiators are holding public meetings during the process to advise the public of progress. The public has expressed support for the collaborative decision-making process. The negotiators announced a proposed solution during a public meeting in Tacoma on 16 September 1996. Under the proposed solution, PacifiCorp would install two scrubbers to reduce SO₂ emissions by 70% by the year 2001 and by 90% by 2007. The negotiators refined the proposed solution to address

concerns expressed by the Northwest Environmental Advocates and others during the public meetings and announced a final target solution on 3 December 1996. The final target solution improves upon the proposed solution by requiring PacifiCorp to fully scrub both units to remove 90% of the SO₂ by the end of 2002. The final solution is now undergoing a full legal process with opportunities for public review under the auspices of SWAPCA.

Position of the National Park Service

Improved controls of air pollution from the Centralia Power Plant are an opportunity to obtain significant reductions in SO₂ emissions and significant improvements in air quality in Mount Rainier National Park and other areas with significant natural resources in the Pacific Northwest. The National Park Service expects the proposed solution to alleviate concerns over natural resources, improve visibility, and reduce harm from acid deposition. The service wishes to pursue the opportunity to work with interested

parties to resolve concerns in a more cooperative, expeditious, and certain manner than provided by the regulatory alternative.

Positions of Other Entities

The U.S. Forest Service has similar concerns about air quality in national forests in the vicinity of the Centralia Power Plant and is participating in the negotiations. The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency generally supports the concerns of the National Park Service. The Washington Department of Ecology believes the Southwest [Washington] Air Pollution Control Authority properly determined the Reasonably Available Control Technology, is interested in facilitating a regional study of visibility to identify the additional sources of emissions that impart adverse effects on natural resources, is participating in the negotiations, and supports additional controls for the Centralia Power Plant. In its analysis of Reasonably Available Control Technology, PacifiCorp indicated that it does not believe the power plant significantly contributed to the impairment of visibility in the park

but is supportive of the voluntary collaborative decision-making process. Other local control districts are also participating in and supportive of the negotiations. All participants hope to achieve greater environmental benefit without adversely affecting the economy of the local community and without need for litigation by any party. The initial public reaction was generally supportive of the goals of the negotiations. The congressional delegation has been briefed and generally supports the process.

Depending on the outcome, the public, some private citizens, some of the congressional delegation, coal miners, environmental groups (for example, the Northwest Environmental Advocates), and other owners of the Centralia Power Plant may oppose the position of the National Park Service.

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