



For Immediate Release
June 2, 2010

Contact: Kristy Meyer
(614) 487-7506 (office)
(614) 63-8948 (cell)
Kristy@theOEC.org

Politics Should Not Trump Human Health, Our Economy, and Our Natural Resources

The Ohio EPA should reject the First Energy Bayshore power plant permit and Require FirstEnergy, instead, to install Cooling Towers and End-of-Pipe Technology to Protect Wildlife and Reduce Mercury Discharges

Statement of the OEC's Director of Agricultural & Clean Water Programs, Kristy Meyer, on the FirstEnergy Bayshore power plant NPDES permit application for reduction of the amount of fish killed each year, reducing the super-heated discharged water into the Maumee Bay, and the application for a mercury variance waiver.

"As you have already heard, the results are in. The Bayshore coal-fire power plant is a bad actor.

"For too long we have been asking the taxpayers to shoulder the efforts to restore and protect our Great Lake, Lake Erie, at the same time that we allow bad actors like the Bayshore power plant to continue to kill fish and pollute our waters with no recourse.

"Lake Erie does so much for us. It bolsters our economy; provides us with drinking water and recreational opportunities; and is the foundation of our sport- and commercial-fishing industry.

"That is why the Ohio EPA must reject the Bayshore power plant's NPDES permit application.

"As outlined in the Toxic Pollutants Priority area in the 2008 *Lake Erie Protection & Restoration Plan*, the number one goal of the state of Ohio is to 'Reduce the loadings of persistent bioaccumulative toxics, in particular mercury, to Lake Erie.' Yet, the Ohio EPA is actually considering granting FirstEnergy a waiver for Bayshore so that FirstEnergy doesn't have to meet the Great Lakes Initiative requirements, requiring substance and recreational anglers to rely on fish consumption advisories to tell them how often and which fish they can eat. I hope those anglers have access to the internet and know where to go to be able to view the fish consumption guides.

“The Ohio EPA and the Bayshore power plant can no longer fall back on the economic burden clause within Ohio’s Administrative Code. There are options out there that the Ohio EPA has been slow to investigate, such as MAR Systems that has been working with facilities around the region to reduce mercury pollutant discharges into our waterways.

“The *Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy To Protect and Restore the Great Lakes* calls for the protection and restoration of key fishery habitat. The Maumee River and western Lake Erie basin is the most biologically productive habitat in the Great Lakes. Yet the Ohio EPA is considering granting the Bayshore power plant a license to continue to kill.

“Granting this permit and the reverse plywood louvers flies in the face of all of our efforts as a state and a region to restore and protect our Great Lakes. Granting a year long study of reverse louvers is like re-using a dirty band-aid. The band-aid just won’t stick and therefore is ineffective. In this case, Kinectrics, Bayshore power plant’s own consultant, states that the reverse louvers will be approximately 3.9% effective in reducing the amount of fish slammed up against the cooling intake screens. They go on to state that if you add the fine mesh behind the louvers to reduce fish entrainment, the effectiveness of the louvers decreases even more.

“It is past time for Ohio to place our health, our economy, and our natural resources ahead of politics. It is time that the Ohio EPA follow their own plans and protect our natural resources; they can do that by rejecting this NPDES permit application and requiring this coal-fired power plant to install and use cooling towers and meet the Great Lakes Initiative mercury standards. This shouldn’t just be about politics. This is our quality of life that they are considering degrading.”

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The mission of the Ohio Environmental Council (OEC) is to secure healthy air, land, and water for all who call Ohio home. The OEC is Ohio’s leading advocate for fresh air, clean water, and sustainable land use. The OEC has a 40-year history of innovation, pragmatism, and success. Using legislative initiatives, legal action, scientific principles, and statewide partnerships, the OEC secures a healthier environment for Ohio’s families and communities. For more information, visit www.theOEC.org.