

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 21, 2010

OCEA seeks dismissal of FirstEnergy's biomass proposal

COLUMBUS, Ohio – FirstEnergy Corp. has failed to prove it meets the requirements to certify the R.E. Burger power plant as a renewable energy facility, the Ohio Consumer and Environmental Advocates (OCEA) said. The consumer groups filed a motion late yesterday asking the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) to dismiss the utility's application.

FirstEnergy has not made sufficient basic information available that demonstrates the energy at the Burger plant would be generated through a renewable process. The OCEA argued FirstEnergy must include the details about the source and location of the biomass materials to be utilized; how the biomass sources will remain sustainable; the method of and distance the fuel will travel; and the net carbon emissions that will be generated before the Burger plant can be certified as a renewable energy facility.

"FirstEnergy is asking for a blank check to burn any kind of biomass at this facility," said Will Reisinger, Ohio Environmental Council attorney. "It wants the PUCO to approve the project, but it doesn't seem to know what it is going to burn, how it is going to get it, or whether it will be obtained in a sustainable, renewable manner."

The OCEA argued the application should be dismissed after the PUCO agreed with the OCEA on multiple occasions that FirstEnergy did not meet its burden of proof. The PUCO indefinitely suspended both the automatic approval and the 60-day approval processes for renewable energy certification in the case.

"FirstEnergy has failed to show what its source of fuel will be and that it will be cost effective," Consumers' Counsel Janine Migden-Ostrander said. "Without this information, the costs consumers would be required to pay could be quite significant."

FirstEnergy has planned to switch its 312-megawatt coal-burning R.E. Burger power plant, located in Shadyside, Ohio, to biomass energy. The plant would require more than 3 million tons of green wood, or more than 10 million trees, annually to maintain the electric output FirstEnergy has said it plans to generate.

The Ohio logging industry currently harvests 1.7 million tons of wood per year, which is used for other applications. At this level, Ohio forest byproducts – bark, branches and leaves – are only able to sustain 38.5 megawatts of electricity, according to data obtained from the U.S. Forest Service. To sustain the

Burger plant with biomass fuel, logging operations in Ohio would have to increase 276 percent above current levels.

FirstEnergy wants to retrofit the power plant as renewable energy to comply with Ohio's electric energy law. The law requires the utility provide at least 12.5 percent of the electricity it sells as renewable energy by 2025.

##

Contacts

Will Reisinger – Ohio Environmental Council – (614) 487-7506

Anthony Rodriguez – Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel – (614) 466-9547