

January 27, 2015

Dear Assistant Administrator McCabe:

The Environmental Protection Agency's [Clean Power Plan](#) must put forward strong targets for existing power plants if we hope to avoid the worst impacts of climate disruption. Carbon pollution from the electric power sector contributes [almost 40 percent](#) of the country's total emissions. Regulating emissions from power plants is an essential part of a climate action plan, and requiring greenhouse gas reductions quickly will be key to the plan's efficacy. We are deeply concerned about your recent statements regarding timing and [decision to delay](#) the finalization of the rule.

Earlier this month, you emphasized the importance of [sufficient flexibility and time](#) to allow states and utilities to meet the emission reduction requirements. Your consideration of phasing in targets more gradually than reductions required in the proposed rule contradicts the science showing we must make greenhouse gas reductions immediately. Issuing this on the first day of the new Congress sends a strong signal that the Administration is willing to cave to the demands of irresponsible lawmakers working on behalf of the fossil fuel industry to stop any policy that would restrict carbon pollution. The House Energy and Commerce Committee majority already expressed its intent to undermine the rule since it would require reductions [too quickly](#). Your suggestions to weaken the rule will only encourage them to push harder to make the rule more and more inadequate.

Acting swiftly to reduce carbon pollution is necessary. Greenhouse gases have a strong cumulative effect, remaining in the atmosphere for decades after they are released. This means that immediate reductions are more important than reductions in future years. The longer states are given to comply, the more today's emissions are magnified, and the greater chance there is of catastrophic impacts in the future. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has found that [significant reductions](#) are needed by 2020 in order to keep atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide at sustainable levels prevent the worst consequences of climate disruption. Even based on the most optimistic estimates of the proposed rule, the Clean Power Plan would cut carbon dioxide from the power sector only 12 percent below 2012 levels by 2020, or less than four percent of economy-wide greenhouse gases. The Clean Power Plan should be radically strengthened.

We are already feeling the impacts of climate disruption and cannot afford to wait to take action. Climate disruption increases the frequency and length of [droughts](#) – like those we are currently experiencing in the western U.S. – with debilitating effects on agriculture and livestock cultivation. It causes hotter, drier weather that fuels destructive [wildfires](#). [Rising sea levels](#) are destroying sources of freshwater and overtaking populated coastlines while warmer oceans contribute to [hurricanes](#) – like Katrina and Sandy – of more intense magnitude than has been seen in the past.

We urge you to stand strong against the calls to weaken the rule and, instead, strengthen the rule to require steeper reductions by 2020. As you said yourself, EPA prides itself on “follow[ing] the science [and] protect[ing] public health.” Please follow this tradition and implement the authority that the Clean Air Act gives to the EPA by mandating steep reductions by 2020 in the final existing power plant rule.

Sincerely,

National

Center for Biological Diversity
Friends of the Earth U.S.
Green America
Greenpeace USA
Hands Across the Sand
Labor Network for Sustainability
Ocean Conservation Research
Public Citizen
Solar Grid Storage
Sciencecorps
Unitarian Universalist Association
Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives

Local/Regional

Alaska's Big Village Network
Berkshire Environmental Action Team (MA)
Better Future Project (MA)
Bold Nebraska
Calvert Citizens for a Healthy Community (MD)
Crabshell Alliance (MD)
Endangered Habitats League (CA)
Earth Day New York
Fairmont, MN Peace Group
Nature Abounds (PA)
Nuclear Watch South
Protect Orange County (NY)
River Guardian Foundation (NC)
Save Our Sky Blue Waters (MN)
Stop The Minisink Compressor Station (NY)
Western Nebraska Resources Council