

National Park Service
Briefing Paper

Prepared for: Director
Submitted: July 15, 1997 State: Washington

Title: Centralia Power Plant Collaborative Decision Making Process (CDM) and Mount Rainier National Park

Issue: Need to Implement CDM Solution and Need for Monitoring Assessment

Background:

- o Scientific data suggest that sulfur dioxide (SO₂) emissions from the Centralia Power Plant contribute to visibility impairment and acid deposition at Mount Rainier National Park. The power plant currently uses high sulfur coal as a fuel and does not use any control equipment to reduce emissions. The plant currently emits approximately 69,000 tons per year of SO₂.
- o Because the plant contributes to visibility impairment at the park, it qualifies as a potential candidate for Best Available Retrofit Technology (BART) to reduce SO₂ emissions.
- o In order to avoid the resource and time intensive BART process, the National Park Service, the plant owners, the US Forest Service (USFS), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and state and local regulatory agencies formed a Collaborative Decision Making (CDM) group to negotiate additional SO₂ emission reductions at the plant.
- o After a year of negotiations, the CDM group announced its "final target solution" in December of 1996. The solution calls for 90% percent reduction of SO₂ emissions through technology, with a permitted level not to exceed 10,000 tons per year, by the end of 2002. Nitrogen oxide emissions will also be reduced. Tax reductions would be provided to the plant owners to help finance the cost of controls.
- o After the plan underwent public review, the state legislature approved the tax incentive package for the plant owners. On May 15, 1997, Governor Locke signed the bill into law.
- o Although the CDM group saw a need for a comprehensive monitoring assessment (as described under "issue" above), the plant owners were not interested in contributing funds to such work. USFS staff drafted a "strawman proposal" which was distributed to NPS and others in the CDM group. Reportedly, the facilitator for the CDM group, Tim Thompson, has political connections and gave the strawman proposal to the Washington Congressional delegation. Hence, Secretary Babbitt received a Congressional request that DOI coordinate efforts with USFS and EPA and fund, with discretionary funds, a ten-year regional modeling and monitoring assessment covering the condition of alpine lakes, visibility, and ambient air effecting the Class I areas in the Pacific Northwest.

Status:

- o Reportedly, Congress may increase EPA's budget to accommodate some assessment. USFS, EPA, and NPS plan to respond to the Congressional letter indicating support for such an assessment, should funds become available, as well as general intent to continue current monitoring activities. The NPS draft response has been circulating in DOI for surnames since early June, and is expected to be signed shortly.

Position of Interested Parties:

- o See "status" above.

NPS Perspective:

- o The strawman proposal drafted by USFS needs refinement; however, NPS supports the concept. NPS will continue to work with USFS and EPA to refine the proposal, should management and Congress so desire.

Contact:

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