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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Coalition demands more opportunity for citizen comment on pollution permit for controversial Wise Co. power plant**

Opponents of a coal-burning power plant proposed for Wise County are calling on Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to at least double the amount of time the public has to comment on the facility's air emissions. DEQ has set 45 days for public comment, ending February 26, on the draft air pollution permit, which was issued earlier this month. The groups are seeking 90 to 120 days for comment.

In a letter to DEQ this week, the groups also request the DEQ hold three more public hearings, in addition to one scheduled in Wise County on February 11. They are urging hearings be held in Richmond, Tidewater and Northern Virginia.

"Given the intense public interest in this issue, and the great number of Virginians who would be at risk from soot, smog, acid rain, and other impacts from this plant, more time and opportunities are needed to allow for public input into the process," said Cale Jaffe, SELC Staff Attorney.

More than 300 people attended a hearing on the plant January 8 before the State Corporation Commission, which oversees utility rates. More than 120 people testified, more than 90 of whom opposed to the plant. In addition, the commission received 819 written comments, with 815 opposed.

Under the DEQ's draft "Prevention of Significant Deterioration" permit, Dominion would be allowed to emit up to 12,500 tons of sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide and carbon monoxide into the air every year. It would also emit an estimated 70 pounds of mercury, which when transformed in surface water, becomes a neurotoxin that contaminates fish, and in humans can cause brain development defects in fetuses and impede intellectual development in children.

"The estimated 70 pounds of mercury in our air each year will create problems on two fronts—the health of our children and the effectiveness of our teachers," said Kathy Selvage with the

Southern Appalachian Mountain Stewards. “We know the risks. If Dominion builds this power plant, there will be clear repercussions to our children, as well as an impact on the effectiveness of our dedicated teachers.”

In addition, the plant would dump 5.3 million tons carbon dioxide – a leading contributor to global warming – into the air every year over its expected 50-year lifespan. In their letter, the groups say DEQ must consider these greenhouse gas impacts in light of the fact that the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that state and federal agencies have the authority to regulate CO2, and that Congress will likely pass CO2 regulations in the coming few years.

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*The mission of the Wise Energy for Virginia coalition is to stop Dominion Power’s proposed coal-burning power plant Wise County and turn Virginia toward a cleaner, sustainable energy future. [www.WiseEnergyVA.org](http://www.WiseEnergyVA.org)*