

CLEANER AIR COMING TO ST. LOUIS AS AMEREN ANNOUNCES PHASE OUT DATE FOR MERAMEC COAL PLANT

South St. Louis County Community Members Urge Ameren to Make Strong Clean Energy Investment, Create Responsible Timeline for Coal Plant Retirement

Monday, July 7, 2014

Contact:

Emily Rosenwasser, Emily.Rosenwasser@sierraclub.org, 312-251-1680 x119
Sara Edgar, Sara.Edgar@sierraclub.org, 314-497-8757

ST. LOUIS – Late last week, [Ameren filed testimony with the Missouri Public Service Commission \(PSC\)](#) announcing it would phase out its Meramec coal-fired power plant in south St. Louis County by 2022, with an option to phase out the plant more quickly. The announcement comes after years of advocacy from local parents, health and environmental groups to phase out the outdated coal plant in Oakville and invest in clean energy.

“Communities in south St. Louis have struggled with unsafe air for decades, and Ameren’s announcement that it will stop burning coal at the Meramec power plant is an important step forward for these communities,” said **Sara Edgar, Field Organizer with the Sierra Club Beyond Coal campaign in St. Louis**. “We are ready to work with Ameren on a plan to invest in local clean energy, to build a responsible timeline for transition of its workforce at Meramec and to move as expeditiously as possible to stop burning coal in St. Louis.”

The decision to phase out the Meramec coal plant was approved by Ameren’s Board of Directors, citing that the 61-year-old coal plant had reached the end of its useful life. The decision comes as Ameren has seen great success saving energy, and saving its customers money, through customer energy efficiency programs. [Ameren previously stated that the power generated by the Meramec coal plant could be entirely replaced through strong energy efficiency programs.](#)

According to the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy, [Missouri ranks 43rd nationally in energy efficiency](#). But the Sierra Club, Renew Missouri, Earthjustice and the Natural Resources Defense Council have worked successfully over the past several years to encourage Missouri's utility companies to add energy efficiency programs with the hope of improving Missouri's rankings and reducing the state's dependence on coal.

"Pollution from Ameren's coal plants has long put health at risk here in the St. Louis area," said **Dr. John Kissel, a retired physician from St. Louis**. "I'm encouraged to see the shift away from coal begin here in St. Louis, and as a health provider I urge Ameren to start making investments in clean energy as other utility companies have."

The announcement to retire the Meramec coal plant comes as Ameren attempts to gain approval for a \$264 million rate increase from its customers. Ameren currently receives more than 75 percent of its energy from coal, and cited the rising costs of coal as a cause of its rate increase to customers.

"After years of dangerous coal pollution, we could use a breath of fresh air from Ameren and some forward-thinking investments in clean energy," said **Andy Knott, Campaign Representative with the Sierra Club Beyond Coal campaign in St. Louis**. "As utilities elsewhere in the Midwest continue to grow clean energy portfolios, Ameren lags behind with woefully low investments in readily available and cheap resources like wind, solar, and efficiency which can create local clean energy jobs. It's time to change our course here in St. Louis."

Ameren's clean energy portfolio is currently small, and Kansas City Power & Light (KCP&L), Missouri's second-largest electric utility after Ameren, overshadows Ameren when it comes to clean energy investments. In January, KCP&L announced it was nearly doubling its investment in wind power; it will soon have more than nine times the wind energy as Ameren. New investments in wind and energy efficiency programs will save KCP&L customers \$1 billion over the next 20 years.

"As a local mother, this announcement could not come soon enough," said **Donna Seidel, a Mehlville mother who lives close to the Meramec coal plant**. "Our community is looking forward to collaborating with Ameren and other stakeholders to find a plan to make south St. Louis County an even safer place for our families to live."

"I'm grateful to see Ameren start to make a move away from coal, but waiting until 2022 means that thousands of children will be born into a community with polluted air," said **Jan Polizzi, RN, former Missouri State Representative and former Mehlville School Board member**. "As an area resident and community health nurse, I hope to work with Ameren to build a plan that shifts us away from dangerous coal pollution and starts to build our local clean energy economy."

The announcement of the phase out of the Meramec coal plant represents the 168th coal

plant to retire or announce retirement since 2010, cutting nearly 252 million tons of carbon emissions, the equivalent of 53 million passenger vehicles. Today, the United States has more than 61,000 megawatts of installed wind capacity and 13,000 megawatts of installed solar capacity, enough to power the equivalent of 20 million American homes.

###