

# Cooling Towers Will Damage Air Quality, Environment



By Dr. Patrick Moore

As an environmentalist deeply focused on the issues of sustainability and public health, I am troubled by a recent proposed regulation issued by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).

While the officials at DEC may be sincere in their efforts, the affects of this proposal would actually trigger negative environmental consequences which would severely impact the state, especially Westchester County and much of the lower Hudson Valley.

Westchester, Orange and Rockland Counties have already been designated by the U.S. EPA as nonattainment areas for fine particle matter; placing the air quality of the region in violation of federal standards. Enactment of the DEC's proposal at a local level would affect the long-term operations of numerous power plants along the Hudson River including Indian Point.

Building two cooling towers the size of Yankee Stadium at Indian Point will require blasting and moving 2.1 million cubic yards of rock and soil. This will take several years, cost over \$1 billion and require both reactors to be shut down for 40 weeks or more. The cooling towers would emit 100 tons of particulate matter annually, including salt, into the region's air.

The regulation could also force plants like Indian Point to shut their doors, requiring a minimum of four large fossil-fuel burning power plants be constructed to make up for the lost power. Safeguarding public health and meeting federal air standards would be further compromised.

New York's nuclear power fleet is a primary catalyst behind the state's achieving the lowest per-capita carbon emissions in the U.S. And Indian Point's proposal to install "wedgewire" screens to their water intake system would be implemented in a reasonable time frame and without the negative environmental impacts wrought by the cooling tower construction and operation.

The best environmental policies focus on economically viable, sustainable solutions which safeguard the best interests of the community. To achieve the right balance, the New York State DEC should support a common-sense approach that ensures all these important goals are met.

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