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Pennsylvania's ozone RACT requirement proposal
PennFuture statement
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When the DEP issued their updated Reasonably Available Control Technology proposal for ozone in 2014, PennFuture presented testimony in favor of more stringent NO_x emissions limits, in order to protect public health and the environment in Pennsylvania. I am here today to state our support for current improvements; we specifically commend the provision that requires all coal fired power plants with existing selective catalytic reduction (SCR) or selective non-catalytic reduction (SNCR), to deploy that technology in order to reach the proposed emissions targets. Prior to approving the current RACT proposal, however, we urge the DEP to remove the provision that permits coal fired power plants with tangentially-fired boilers to emit .35 lbs of NO_x per mmbtu (compared to .12lbs per MMBtu for plants with SCR installed). *Without existing NO_x controls*

As the largest existing source of NO_x emission in the state, coal fired power plants play a critical role in curbing the formation of harmful smog pollution. Formed from NO_x and volatile organic compounds in the atmosphere, smog pollution is linked to increased incidences of respiratory, lung and heart diseases. Children's lungs are particularly susceptible to smog pollution as kids are outdoors more often and their lungs are still developing. Smog pollution is a major public health concern and improvements to this rule could greatly increase its ability to protect Pennsylvanians.

SCR is the current standard NO_x emissions control technology. At present, many plants opt not to run SCR, even where it is already installed, thereby putting the health of Pennsylvanians at risk. While we support the proposed NO_x pollution limits, which will require plants with SCR to run it (though greater emissions reductions are possible with SCR in place) we are concerned about an existing loophole that must be closed in order to ensure air quality improvements—the so-called Brunner Island exemption.

As the only coal fired power plant in Pennsylvania to not yet install SCR technology, the Brunner Island power plant is one of the biggest polluters in the state. As such, it would be reasonable to expect that the Brunner Island plant would have to clean-up the most in order to comply with the proposed rule. However, as it is currently written, the RACT requirement allows plants that do not have SCR installed to continue operating without facility updates. This exception in the current rule effectively allows the Brunner Island plant to release almost three times the amount of pollution allowed at facilities with up-to-date controls installed, which places an unfair burden on residents in Southeastern PA. Furthermore, as it is currently written, the rule serves as a disincentive to plants considering additional improvements as the Brunner Island loophole demonstrates that they may be financially rewarded for lagging behind, which is in direct opposition to the intent of RACT regulations.

RACT requirements are, by definition and design, intended to require the installation of widely available pollution control technology, which will improve public health and protect the environment without overburdening industry. If the Brunner Island loophole remains in the rule, it will undermine the regulation and set a poor precedent both regionally (as other states develop their own RACT requirements) and in terms of future improvements (as plants consider installing controls for additional pollutants). We urge the DEP to remove this exception prior to passing the rule.