



T. Boone Pickens Media Coverage 11.17.11

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- Blog/Online: 1

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- **Featured topic: The end of coal plants in Hampton Roads?** – *Daily Press* – 12/22/11

http://www.dailypress.com/news/newport-news/dp-nws-yir-science-main-20111222_0_606009.story

BLOG/ONLINE COVERAGE

Featured topic: The end of coal plants in Hampton Roads? – *Daily Press* – 12/22/11

By Cory Nealon

The Yorktown Power Station and Chesapeake Energy Center, the two largest coal-fired power plants in Hampton Roads, burn on average 6,700 tons of coal every day.

The plants, which date to the 1950s, create enough electricity for 260,000 households. Yet both will soon stop burning coal, which is subject to new federal rules that aim to cut the amount of mercury, ozone and other pollutants entering the nation's air and waterways.

Ceasing those operations, combined with a stalled effort to build a massive coal-fired power plant in Surry County, has put Hampton Roads on a path away from the potent, yet dirty, fossil fuel.

The shift has the potential to reduce premature deaths, asthma and other respiratory ailments, as well as spur investment in renewable energy. But it also may result in higher utility bills, put pressure on

other areas of Virginia to make up for the lost power, and cause further investment in a controversial method of obtaining natural gas.

It is for those reasons that the possible abandonment of coal as an energy source in Hampton Roads is the Daily Press' top science and environment story of 2011.

With a projected output of 1,500 megawatts — enough power for 375,000 households — the Cypress Creek Power Station would be Virginia's largest coal plant.

Its development was moving forward until September 2010, when Old Dominion Electric Cooperative announced it would shelve the project for at least 18 months due to the new federal rules and the sluggish economy.

The project was dealt another blow last month when a Circuit Court judge invalidated a key Dendron Town Council vote to rezone land necessary to build the \$6 billion plant. Opponents, who argue the plant would cost \$208 million annually in health care costs, applauded the decisions.

The decisions should mark "the beginning of the end for this ill-conceived project," a Chesapeake Bay Foundation statement said. A spokesman for the Glen Allen-based cooperative said Thursday it would reapply for the zoning change.

Dominion Virginia Power owns the Yorktown and Chesapeake plants. Rather than install costly pollution-control equipment, the Richmond-based utility announced in September it would start closing Yorktown and Chesapeake in 2015.

At Chesapeake alone, the move will cut emissions of mercury, a neurotoxin particularly harmful to children and pregnant woman, by 140 pounds annually.

Dominion plans to convert part of the Yorktown plant to natural gas, a fossil fuel that burns cleaner than coal. The decision is based, in part, on new discoveries of gas buried underground in shale formations.

"It has the opportunity to change everything for us," billionaire Texas oilman T. Boone Pickens told Gov. Bob McDonnell's energy conference in Richmond in October 2010.

The method of tapping shale gas, called hydraulic fracturing or "fracking," stirs controversy — the EPA earlier this month said for the first time that fracking may cause groundwater pollution.

In addition to natural gas, Dominion is investing in biomass — a renewable form of energy that involves the burning of living or recently living materials — to meet electricity demands it expects will grow by 30 percent by 2026.

To make up for lost generation at Yorktown and Chesapeake, Dominion plans to build a 56-mile transmission line from Newport News to Charles City to funnel electricity into the Peninsula.

The line, which will be supplied by new natural gas plants in the western part of the state and other sources, is expected to cost \$150 million to \$200 million. Dominion has not ruled out increasing customers' utility bills to pay for the project, spokeswoman Bonita Harris said.

Eileen Levandoski is the Hampton Roads' coordinator for the Sierra Club, one of many groups to fight coal plant expansion in the region. While the year has been fruitful, she said, much work remains on the horizon.

"We're working on getting rid of the coal plants," she said. "The biggest challenge now is to replace them with renewable energy."

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