



Deer Park Community Advisory Council

Summary of February 28, 2011 Meeting

Second DPCAC Meeting on Greenhouse Gases Features Sierra Club Speaker

To hear an environmental group perspective on greenhouse gases, the Deer Park Community Advisory Council (DPCAC) invited Jennifer Powis, Senior Regional Representative for the Sierra Club in Texas, to speak in late February. In January, an American Chemistry Council staff member presented the costs and benefits of greenhouse gas reduction from an industry perspective. Both presentations are available on the [Deer Park CAC website](#).

Powis began by stating that Texas is first in emissions of carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas, according to US Department of Energy estimates. Thus Texas is sure to be affected by new US Environmental Protection Agency rules that will treat greenhouse gases like any other pollutant under the Clean Air Act. When plants seek air permits or amendments, regulators will impose permit restrictions on their greenhouse gases, in certain cases.

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) is the agency from which plants usually obtain their air permits. However, Texas has objected to EPA's regulation of carbon dioxide and its equivalents, so EPA has taken over the greenhouse gas permitting program in the state. Powis said Texas has objected but has lost 5 legal challenges to date.

To explain the Sierra Club's emphasis on coal, Powis said 63% of greenhouse gases come from generation of electricity, 6% from petroleum refining, and 2% from petrochemical plants. The fuel source most often used by electricity generators is coal, making it the source of 81% of the greenhouse gas emissions from power generators.

The Sierra Club's first priority is to stop the construction of new coal plants nationwide. Doing so would reduce greenhouse gases and other emissions, such as mercury. Locally, the environmental group has opposed the recently permitted White Stallion coal plant in Bay City. One of their concerns is that prevailing winds will bring its emissions into the ozone nonattainment area that includes Harris, Galveston, and Brazoria Counties when that area has

only attained the currently applicable ozone standard in the last two years and will be challenged to attain a newer, more protective ozone standard.

Public health concerns are at the root of the Sierra Club's push for cleaner air. Powis said that research shows that asthma is exacerbated on high ozone days, and more heart attacks occur when air quality is poor. Air quality is one of 4 climate change issues that EPA has identified. A recent Houston-Galveston Area Council (HGAC) report calls for implementation of stricter emission controls to reduce the number of bad air days. Without judging whether climate change computer models are accurate, the HGAC Foresight Panel recommended this and other strategies to local governments to adapt to climate change impacts if they occur.

Powis believes that with commitment and innovative technology, communities can enjoy economic benefits while protecting public health and the environment.

DPCAC members will take a plant tour in March. The next regular meeting will be Monday, April 26 at 6:00 p.m. For details, contact facilitator Diane Sheridan at 281-326-5253.

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