

# THE NEWS & OBSERVER

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## TVA cleanup might save lives here

Cutting pollution by the power plants could prevent 99 deaths in North Carolina annually, say experts for a suit by the state.

BY WADE RAWLINS  
STAFF WRITER

Reports by experts supporting North Carolina's lawsuit against the Tennessee Valley Authority describe how much cleaner and healthier the state could be if more pollution controls were added to the power agency's plants.

People in the East and Midwest would suffer about 1,400 fewer premature deaths a year, environmental health experts say, while North Carolina children would miss 2,300 fewer school days annually. And the views in the Great Smoky

Mountains would increase from 15 miles to 26 miles on the smoggiest days, says another.

The reports, filed as part of the lawsuit scheduled for trial this fall, offer an unusual look at air pollution problems in North Carolina. They consider what benefits the state and other parts of the Southeast could get if the TVA met the same standards for its plants that North Carolina has for its own.

Residents of North Carolina, Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Ohio and Tennessee would gain the most health benefits from cuts

### INSIDE

**GLOBAL WARMING:** U.N. prediction is for near-apocalyptic conditions. ▶ 14A

in pollution, said the experts in power plant emissions, air modeling and environmental health.

"These expert reports show that pollution from TVA has a devastating impact on the air we breathe and the health of North Carolinians," said Roy Cooper, state attorney general, in a statement. He declined to be interviewed, citing

the pending lawsuit.

TVA officials dispute claims that pollution from their plants harms North Carolinians. They say they have spent \$4.6 billion in the past 30 years to reduce emissions and are complying with federal air pollution laws.

In addition, the utility is spending \$1.2 billion on pollution controls being built or scheduled at three plants in East Tennessee. In February, the utility announced plans to put scrubbers on its John Sevier plant at Rogersville, Tenn., the closest to North Carolina, be-

ginning in 2008.

"There is no evidence that TVA's emissions are having any kind of adverse health effects on people in Tennessee or North Carolina," said John Moulton, a TVA spokesman. "The air quality in Tennessee, North Carolina and the entire region is a lot better than any time in the past three decades and continues to improve."

Last year, Cooper sued the TVA, claiming that North Carolina residents suffered ill health

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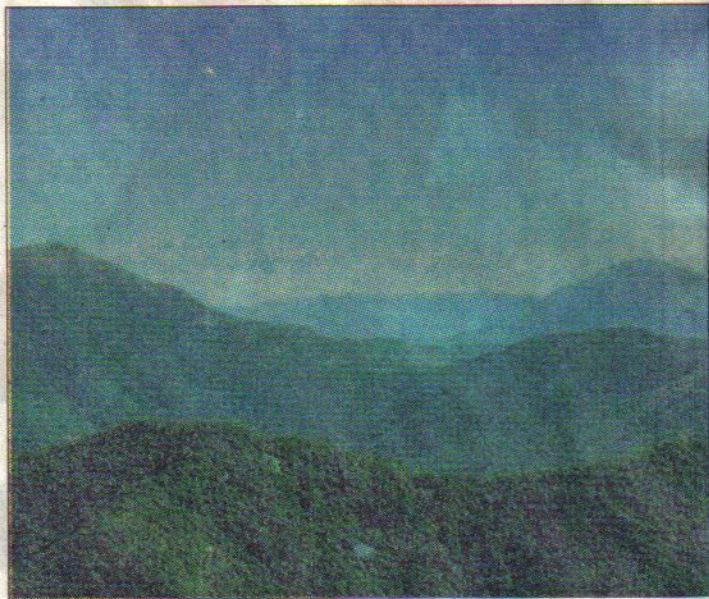
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## TWO VIEWS OF THE FUTURE



These digital renderings show simulated views of the Mount Pisgah vista at Shining Rock Wilderness in 2013. They represent a typical day with poor visibility. On the left, visibility is 22.5 miles. The simulation was run again, on the right, with hypothetical emission controls put on the TVA plants, and visibility increased to 45.6 miles.

SONOMA TECHNOLOGY INC.

## TVA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

from pollutants blowing across the mountains from TVA's 11 coal-fired power plants in Alabama, Kentucky and Tennessee. North Carolina's environment and economy also are harmed by TVA's emissions, which pose a nuisance, the lawsuit contends.

The lawsuit asks the court to order TVA to reduce emissions of sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides and mercury. The pollutants create haze and soot, foul creeks and lead to acid rain.

A trial on the lawsuit is tentatively scheduled in U.S. District Court in Asheville in October.

Meanwhile, the TVA is asking a federal appeals court to dismiss the suit, arguing essentially that as a federal agency, the utility has immunity from nuisance lawsuits. A lower court rejected the dismissal motion. Nineteen states, including New York, California, Ohio and

South Carolina, have joined North Carolina in opposing TVA's appeal.

Congress created the authority in 1933 to provide power and promote economic development in the Southeast. Today, it is the nation's largest public power company. It provides electricity to 8.7 million people in parts of seven states. The 11 coal-burning plants produce most of its electricity.

The TVA said it is taking a broad approach to improving air quality and plans to make its emissions cleaner than even North Carolina's. But most of the reductions aren't expected until after 2015.

State officials say the lawsuit's goal is to get reductions more quickly. Cooper is asking the court to make TVA cut emissions to levels near those that are required for North Carolina plants under the state's Clean Smokestacks Act by 2013.

Computer simulations of wind-driven emissions from the TVA plants show that pollutants from each plant foul North Carolina's air

and environment, as well as that of many other states, according to a report prepared by Sonoma Technology, a consulting firm specializing in air quality analysis.

The consultants estimated emission levels at TVA plants in 2013 without additional controls, then projected that installing controls similar to those planned at North Carolina utilities would reduce nitrogen oxides by 48 percent and cut sulphur dioxide by 69 percent.

Nitrogen oxides contribute to the formation of ground-level ozone. Both nitrogen oxides and sulphur dioxide contribute to the formation of tiny particles of soot that can penetrate deep in the lungs.

Fine soot and ozone are linked to thousands of premature deaths and illnesses each year, as well as reduced visibility, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency says.

John Spengler and Jonathan Levy, professors of environmental health at Harvard University, said that the reduced levels would avert about 1,400 premature deaths annually across 33 states in the East and Midwest where TVA pollution disperses.

About 99 North Carolinians a year would be spared, the professors said. Tennessee would have the most early deaths prevented, 180.

Besides fewer early deaths and illnesses, added controls would improve vistas at national parks and wilderness areas in Western North Carolina.

For example, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park would have clearer visibility 43 days a year, while wilderness areas such as Shining Rock would have improved views up to 55 days a year. Visibility in the Great Smoky Mountains would increase from 15 miles to 26 miles on the smoggiest days.

James Staudt, who consults on utility air pollution controls, estimated the total cost to retrofit TVA plants with air pollution control between 2008 and 2012 would be \$3 billion, plus \$220 million a year in operating costs.

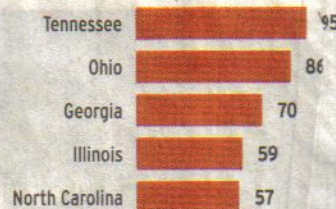
David Freeman, a former chairman of the TVA board of directors who also gave expert testimony for North Carolina, said Staudt's estimates are in line with TVA's own estimates of \$3 billion to \$5 billion in its 2005 annual report.

"The control measures ... are commonplace in the electric power

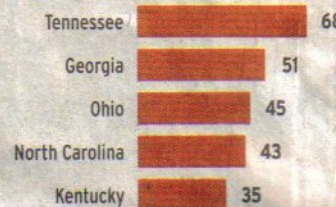
## LESS POLLUTION, LESS ILLNESS

If North Carolina wins its lawsuit against TVA, environmental health experts say several states would see less illness. These graphs show some of the expected reduction in health problems if TVA's pollution controls on its coal-fired plants were similar to what North Carolina is installing.

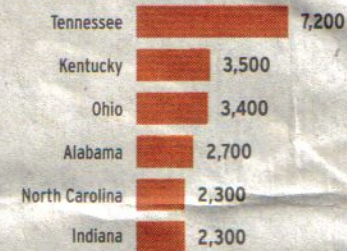
### Emergency room visits for asthma



### Chronic bronchitis



### School absences



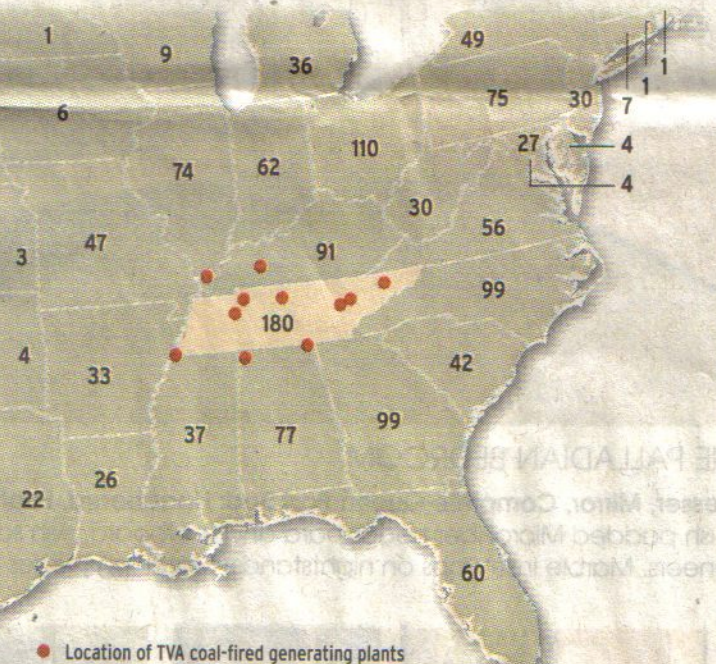
Source: Public Health Benefits of Additional TVA Emissions Controls, John Spengler and Jonathan Levy, expert testimony report for state of North Carolina

The News & Observer

## POLLUTION'S TOLL

Experts estimate that hundreds of premature deaths could be prevented each year if TVA's coal-burning power plants had pollution controls that were comparable to those being installed at plants in North Carolina.

### Reports show state-by-state how premature deaths could decline



Source: Public Health Benefits of Additional TVA Emissions Controls, John Spengler and Jonathan Levy, expert testimony report for state of North Carolina

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industry today, and in my view, are clearly doable by TVA," Freeman said.

Freeman said that keeping utility rates low at the expense of human health and the environment is unacceptable in the 21st century.

"I testify with sadness and regret," Freeman said, "that the current TVA management needs a nudge from its neighbors in order to do what clearly is required for environmental stewardship."

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