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Size : 70 Inches Sq Sioux City, IA Circulation: 39986

Keywords: Iowa Environmental Council



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SERGEANT BLUFF — A MidAmerican Energy proposal to discharge excess liquid runoff from its coal ash storage facility near Sergeant Bluff into the Missouri River is drawing fire from Iowa environmentalists.

The Iowa Environmental Council has criticized the plan, saying MidAmerican did not adequately consider alternatives other than discharging the coal ash leachate into the river near its Neal North Energy Center. The group also said the en-

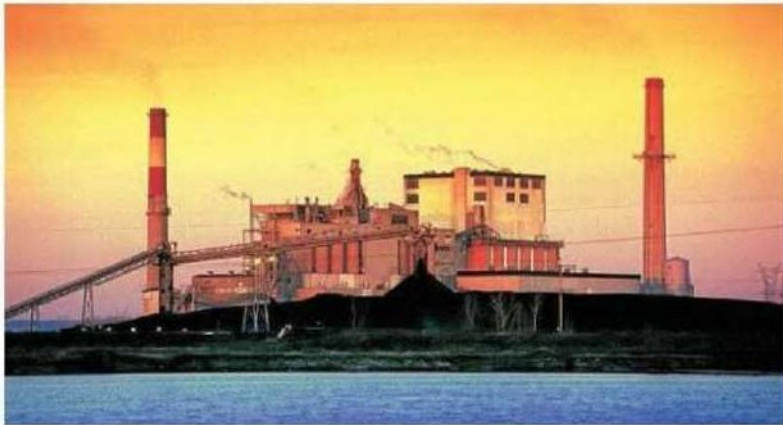
ergy company ignored proposed federal Environmental Protection Agency rule changes that, if implemented, would require treatment of all discharges from coal plants into waterways.

“MidAmerican is proposing to discharge a range of heavy metals, like mercury, that it has the ability to treat. EPA is telling utilities to treat the leachate, not send it directly to the river,” Steve Guyer, IEC energy policy manager said in a news release.

MidAmerican said its plan meets federal and state standards, and its proposal does

not require a specific treatment method, only that the discharge meets federal limits for pollutants.

“Contrary to the IEC’s claims, MidAmerican did consider current and potentially more



PROVIDED BY MIDAMERICAN ENERGY COMPANY

MidAmerican Energy’s Neal North Energy Center North complex at Port Neal along the Missouri River is shown in an undated photo. A MidAmerican plan to discharge coal ash waste water into the Missouri River has drawn criticism from environmental groups.

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Concerns

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stringent future regulatory requirements as the proposal was being developed," the company said in a released statement. "The EPA does not require a particular type of technology or process; rather, it establishes limits that are protective of public health and environment, and sampling of the leachate demonstrates that it will meet the more stringent limitations proposed by the EPA.

"The bottom line is that MidAmerican's proposed plan meets both EPA's current regulations and would meet the new, more stringent standards that EPA has proposed to implement."

A public comment period on the proposal ended April 14, and MidAmerican now has the option of revising its analysis before submitting it to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, which will approve or deny a permit application. A DNR review of the plan could take weeks before a ruling is issued.

The IEC said it was joined in its opposition by other environmental groups, and

more than 200 public comments about the plan were submitted through the IEC's website.



Schmidt

attorney for the IEC, a Des Moines-based nonprofit group that describes itself as a public interest corporation that works to protect waters in Iowa and the Midwest.

Among the determinations the DNR must make is if MidAmerican's plan complies with water quality standards and whether the company chose an alternative that is the least degrading to the environment and is the most practical.

Leachate is water that soaks through the power plant's coal ash landfill. According to MidAmerican's plan, the company discharged leachate into the river from 2012 until 2018, when a holding pond was built to store the runoff. During periods of normal to high precipitation, the leachate evaporates.

After extreme precipitation events, the holding pond reaches higher levels and does not evaporate quickly. MidAmerican said attempts to enhance natural evaporation with mechanical evaporators have been unsuccessful.

If the company's plan is approved, coal ash leachate would be discharged into the river infrequently, only after extreme weather events, said Geoff Greenwood, MidAmerican media relations manager.

"We hope the DNR determines the analysis by Mid-American is inadequate," said Mike Schmidt, staff at-

"This proposal is an additional way to control and manage leachate in the limited instances where it might be discharged during extremely high precipitation events," Greenwood said.

MidAmerican said tests have shown pollutants such as mercury and lead contained in the waste water fall below federal limits.

The IEC countered that no amount of mercury or lead is safe for consumption, and those and other materials accumulate over time in living organisms, including humans, that ingest them.

"The Missouri River is already damaged from agricultural pollution and other discharges. We don't need to add mercury, lead, arse-

nic, cyanide and other toxic metals to the mix and degrade this river, which some people rely on for drinking water, even further," Alicia Vasto, IEC water and land stewardship director said in a news release.

The IEC has urged Mid-American to adopt stricter practices of treating the waste water to remove toxic materials before discharge, or to continue its current practice of relying on evaporation from the holding pool.

"MidAmerican's analysis does not demonstrate that the proposed degradation is necessary, and it fails to consider reasonable alternatives available," the IEC said.

Greenwood said the company considered all alternatives to manage the leachate during times of heavy precipitation. All complied

with EPA guidelines.

"MidAmerican's proposal meets the new standards EPA has proposed, which are based on the latest science, to protect our vital water resources and safe drinking water, while also supporting agriculture, industry, recreation activities and thriving communities," Greenwood said.