



Dec. 18, 2023

Administrator Michael S. Regan
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Submitted to the Federal eRulemaking Portal, www.regulations.gov

Re: Supplemental Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for New Source Performance Standards for Greenhouse Gas Emissions from New, Modified, and Reconstructed Fossil Fuel-Fired Electric Generating Units; Emission Guidelines for Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Existing Fossil Fuel-Fired Electric Generating Units; and Repeal of the Affordable Clean Energy Rule; 88 Fed. Reg. 80,682 (November 20, 2023)

Dear Administrator Regan,

On behalf of the Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina, Inc., and Central Electric Power Cooperative, Inc., and their members, we submit the following comments in response to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's ("EPA") supplemental notice of proposed rulemaking related to its proposed rules to limit greenhouse gas emissions from new and existing fossil fuel-fired electric generating units.

The Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina ("ECSC") is a not-for-profit trade association of 18 distribution electric cooperatives in South Carolina. Central Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. ("Central") is a not-for-profit generation and transmission cooperative that purchases and provides wholesale electricity to all 19 S.C. electric cooperatives over more than 800 miles of transmission lines.

ECSC and Central are both members of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association and endorse the comments they will submit on this supplemental notice.

We are disappointed to see that the EPA continues to plow ahead with its absurd crusade to solve the world's real energy problems with pretend solutions.

On Nov. 20, 2023, the EPA published a [supplemental notice](#) of proposed rulemaking seeking further input on its plans to enact the country's strictest-ever limits on greenhouse gas emissions from coal and natural gas power plants.

Essentially, six months after proposing regulations that were widely decried as illegal and unworkable, the EPA is asking the public – and specifically small businesses – for help making the proposed rules lawful and practical.

Rather than do its homework and come up with a responsible path toward decarbonizing the utility industry and the U.S. economy, the EPA is punting its responsibility to the very people and organizations who will face the brunt of these regulations. To add insult to injury, the EPA has allotted the public just 30 days in the middle of the holiday season to research and draft the deeply complex, highly technical comments the agency has requested. This comes after the EPA provided the public a historically short 75-day comment period when it first proposed these regulations this summer.

We respectfully decline to participate in the EPA's latest thought exercise, lest we lend credence to what remains a fundamentally flawed proposal.

The EPA's proposed rules will be neither legal nor practical so long as they require that power plants rapidly implement expensive, unproven and commercially unavailable technologies. We hope the EPA's proposed solutions – carbon capture and sequestration (“CCS”) and hydrogen co-firing – eventually prove to be effective, efficient methods of reducing the utility industry's carbon emissions. But neither has been adequately demonstrated, and both rely on critical infrastructure that doesn't exist and will take years, perhaps even decades, and billions of dollars to build.

Unfortunately, the required rapid adoption of these two nascent technologies forms the bedrock of the EPA's proposed regulations.

This is precisely why, in our original public comment in August, South Carolina's electric cooperatives urged the EPA to withdraw these proposed regulations.¹

As not-for-profit, consumer-owned utilities, electric cooperatives are deeply concerned about maintaining affordable and reliable electric service for our members. South Carolina's electric cooperatives collectively serve 70% of the state's land mass, delivering power to nearly 2 million people in all 46 S.C. counties. The cooperatives serve some of the poorest, most remote areas of our state, including all of South Carolina's persistent poverty counties.

As mentioned in our original comment, these rural cooperative members cannot afford to be the guinea pigs of the EPA's ill-advised nationwide experiment. Those who live on fixed incomes in energy inefficient homes cannot afford the higher rates that will come with a rushed industry-wide transition to CCS, co-firing of scarce hydrogen fuel, and the buildout of the vast new pipeline networks these technologies require.

They cannot be made to suffer through sweltering summer days without air conditioning and frigid winter nights without heat because the EPA played fast and loose with America's power grid.

Make no mistake, the EPA's proposed regulations jeopardize electric reliability. These rules threaten to usher in an era of regular brownouts and blackouts as dependable coal and natural gas

¹ Comments submitted by Central Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. and The Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina, Inc. August 4, 2023, Available at: <https://www.regulations.gov/comment/EPA-HQ-OAR-2023-0072-0430>

power plants are forced to shutter prematurely before adequate replacement generation is in place.

These EPA regulations couldn't come at a worse time – amid a period of soaring demand for electricity and the growing electrification of the economy. This is especially true in South Carolina, a state where rapid population growth and a parade of economic development successes have narrowed the once-comfortable gap between power supply capacity and demand.

Rural South Carolina has waited a long time for the kind of economic development our state is currently experiencing, major projects that can enhance quality of life, improve local schools and revitalize communities. Now the EPA's regulations threaten to cut off that faucet of game-changing economic development by forcing the shutdown of power plants that supply the reliable electricity that major industries require.

This isn't a hypothetical crisis we could face in the distant future. We are facing a power crunch now, and the EPA is only making it worse.

Just last month, the North American Electric Reliability Corp. warned that half the country could run out of power in the event of extreme weather this winter.² That report found that South Carolina faces an elevated risk of winter outages, just a year after hundreds of thousands of households across the Carolinas lost power amid freezing temperatures last Christmas Eve.

As representatives for South Carolina's electric cooperatives and their consumer-members, we again urge the EPA to come back to reality, consider the real-world consequences these proposed regulations carry for rural South Carolinians, and go back to the drawing board to craft a solution that safeguards our environment without putting lives and livelihoods at risk.

² 2023-2024 Winter Reliability Assessment, North American Reliability Corporation, Available at: https://www.nerc.com/pa/RAPA/ra/Reliability%20Assessments%20DL/NERC_WRA_2023.pdf