

DER seeks regional control of acid rain

ATLANTA—Clifford L. Jones, secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources, said today air pollution from neighboring and midwestern states is causing serious environmental and economic problems in Pennsylvania.

Jones made his remarks at a meeting here of regional administrators for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. He urged the agency to require air pollution controls on a regional, rather than a state-by-state basis.

"There are environmental

as well as economic consequences of this transport of air pollution across state boundaries," Jones said. "From an environmental standpoint, it exacerbates our existing air pollution and acid precipitation problems.

"Several areas of western Pennsylvania are experiencing difficulty in attaining and maintaining the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. Air pollution from upwind states is significantly contributing to this problem.

"In addition, Pennsylvania has measures rain with a pH as low as 2.32 (7 is

neutral) in the Allegheny National Forest. This is more acidic than rain measured in the Adirondack region of New York, an area long recognized as experiencing acid precipitation problems."

Jones said acid rain and snow can wipe out streams that contain trout and other fish and aquatic life, suppress the growth of aquatic vegetation, cause the leaching of heavy metals into water, soil and plants, stunt the growth of trees and make them less resistant to insects and disease and reduce the fertility of soil.

"The economic impacts of the interstate transport of air pollution is a major concern because it requires Pennsylvania to adopt stricter emission limitations for its industries," Jones said.

"As a result, a greater economic burden is placed on Pennsylvania industries and economic growth and development is discouraged.

"In addition, acid rain caused by the long distance transport of air pollution may be responsible for substantial adverse effects on cropland, forest productivity, drinking water supplies and corrosive damage to cars, buildings and other structures.

"This further contributes to the economic burden imposed on Pennsylvania."

Jones said the problem occurs because EPA allows states to adopt emission limits designed to achieve the ambient standards in local areas by the use of taller stacks that cause pollution to be carried far downwind.

He said EPA also does not take long distance transportation of pollution into account when computing emission limits in those states.

Jones said Pennsylvania already has sued EPA for allowing two power plants in West Virginia near the Pennsylvania border to increase significantly the amount of sulfur dioxide

they emit by 700,000 tons per year.

And he said Pennsylvania is prepared to sue EPA if it goes ahead with a similar proposed relaxation in Ohio.

"This is not the course Pennsylvania wants to take," Jones said. "We would prefer to work with EPA and the midwestern states to develop a multi-stage regional solution to our problems.

"To accomplish this we must all recognize that the sulfur dioxide, sulfates and acid rain problems in Pennsylvania and the northeast are multi-state problems.

"Already high and increasing SO₂ emissions in the Midwest cannot continue without significant impacts to downwind states.

"This is an interstate problem and it requires a multi-state solution. EPA is part of the problem. EPA is also the only agency which has the authority to solve this problem."

Jones said EPA should require states in the midwest and the Ohio River basin to share equally in pollution control requirements.

"EPA has sufficient regulatory authority to undertake interstate regulation of air pollution, but has not exercised its authority because it has treated each air pollutant category and each power plant source in isolation and in a narrow geographical area.

Jones said Pennsylvania has required all power plants, even those in "clean" areas, to control sulfur dioxide to a reasonable degree. He said other states should require the same.

"While the Pennsylvania standard many not be the precise emission limitation that should be set everywhere, application of an emission ceiling which can be easily attained through coal washing or by the use of low sulfur coal will prevent the problem from getting worse and provide room for growth and increased coal utilization," he said.

"This suggested solution should not discourage coal production. Coal is a vital part of the energy future. The only question is whether these power plants burn cleaned coal or dirty coal."

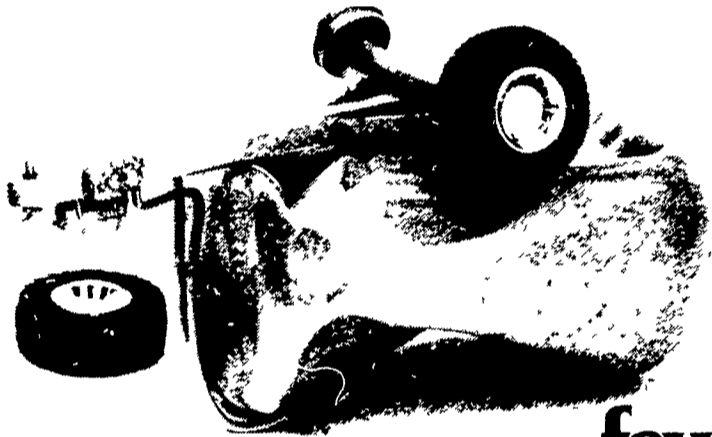
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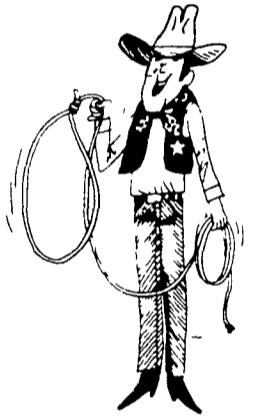
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