

FirstEnergy asked to end fish kill at power plant

Environmental groups put yearly damage at \$30 million

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A coalition of Ohio environmental groups on Wednesday charged that massive fish kills at FirstEnergy Corp.'s coal-fired Bay Shore power plant near Toledo cause nearly \$30 million annually in damage.

The groups released a new economic analysis that says the plant causes \$29.7 million in damage by destroying fish that otherwise would be used by Ohioans for recreation or commercial sale.

The groups want the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources to force the Akron-based utility to install a \$100 million cooling tower to keep the Lake Erie fish alive.

A study conducted for the Ohio EPA estimates the plant in the Toledo suburb of Oregon kills 46 million fish per year that are caught in the plant's cooling-water screens. In addition, an estimated 14 million juvenile fish and more than 2 billion larval fish are killed annually by passing through intake screens and going through equipment in the power plant, according to the analysis.

The plant is where the Maumee River empties into Lake Erie. That is a major spawning ground for fish and plays a key role in creating an \$800 million-a-year Lake Erie fishery.

FirstEnergy last spring installed \$500,000 reverse louvers that look like slotted shutters and fine-mesh screening.

FirstEnergy spokesman Mark Durbin said the company is aware of the magnitude of the problem and is trying to find a permanent solution.

The Bay Shore plant, he said, provides \$100 million a year in economic benefits to the Toledo area.

A final EPA permit must be released by July 1, 2011.

FirstEnergy could be required to begin construction on a permanent fish-saving system by May 1, 2013, and must have it operating by Oct. 1, 2014.

The EPA wants the new system to curtail fish screen deaths by 80 percent and intake deaths by 60 percent. Eco-groups contend that cooling towers can reduce fish deaths by more than 90 percent.

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