

Clean Coal Sets Its Dirty Sights on the Jersey Shore

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I never thought I'd find myself sticking up for the Jersey Shore – but luckily this article isn't about Snooki. It's about the health and economy of the 40,000 residents of Linden, New Jersey, and the 1.8 million more who live within ten miles of Linden.

Linden, which borders Staten Island, is the site of the proposed PurGen coal power plant, which would employ a highly-experimental – and highly-risky – form of carbon sequestration. In other words, the myth of “clean coal” is alive and well.

SCS Energy, the Massachusetts-based corporation behind PurGen, wants to take a major gamble in moving its compressed CO₂ emissions 140 miles to an underwater location approximately 70 miles off the Atlantic City coast, where the CO₂ would supposedly be buried [under sandstone](#) “for millions of years.”

The plant would be the first of its kind in the world, so it should come as no surprise that the proposal is a major cause for concern among New Jersey environmentalists, fishermen, and lawmakers. According to [Dr. Heather Saffert](#) of Clean Ocean America, “We don't really have a good understanding of how the CO₂ is going to react with other minerals... The PurGen project is based on one company's models. What if they're wrong?”

Although the pipeline would be required to be at least three feet under the ocean floor, Dr. Saffert points out that the floor is “a very physically-dynamic area.” It wouldn't take much for those three feet of silt and mud to shift, exposing the pipeline and putting the local ecosystem at risk, along with all the jobs that depend on it.

Even if Dr. Saffert is wrong and SCS's new technology will successfully bury 90 percent of the plant's CO₂ emissions, the climate threat is only one of many problems posed by new coal plants. There are, of course, a myriad of issues surrounding the mining necessary for a plant like this to exist, from mountain-top removal to coal slurry. Furthermore, [out of the entire U.S. electric industry](#), coal produces 99 percent of

mercury emissions, 96 percent of sulfur dioxide emissions, 93 percent of nitrogen oxide emissions, and, perhaps most importantly for a town like Linden, untold amounts of deadly soot.

True, coal power plants do produce jobs, and there are folks who think those jobs are worth the 24,000 deaths and 550,000 asthma attacks coal causes in the U.S. [each year](#). But at least in Linden, the mostly-temporary jobs the plant would create are far out-numbered by the jobs provided by the state's tourist and fishing industries – kind of like the ratio between jobs on the BP Deepwater Horizon rig and jobs lost across the Gulf Coast in the oil spill's aftermath.

Small wonder that the people of Linden and New Jersey are overwhelmingly opposed to the new plant. A similar proposal from SCS last year was [voted down](#) by the town council 7-4. Earlier this month, the Atlantic City city council announced [their own opposition](#) to the project. And 35 local civic, environmental, and faith groups have joined the [Stop PurGen Coal Plant campaign](#).

Lend your support to the Stop PurGen campaign, the people of Linden, and the environment by signing [this Sierra Club petition to Governor Chris Christie](#). He may not believe in the science of climate change, but surely he believes in saving the health and the economy of New Jersey.

Photo credit: Atlantic City, just 70 miles from the proposed carbon dump, [courtesy Wikipedia](#).

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