

Court kills rules to cut coal plant pollution

By **MATTHEW BROWN**
Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. — A federal appeals court has struck down pollution rules intended to reduce haze from coal that is burned in Montana to provide electricity for people in the Pacific Northwest.

Haze reduces visibility and is caused by tiny particles of nitrogen oxide and sulfur dioxide. The Clean Air Act requires companies to use the best available technology on older coal plants to reduce the pollutants, which can cause health problems such as respiratory illness.

But a three-judge panel of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said the rules from the Environmental Protection Agency would arbitrarily require PPL Montana to install pollution controls costing tens of millions of dollars without assurance of improvements in visibility.

Tuesday's ruling applies to the 2,100-megawatt Colstrip plant and a second plant in Billings that recently shut down partly because of the projected cost of complying with separate mercury pollution rules.

The 2012 haze rules aim to protect regional air quality, including in parks and scenic areas such as Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming and Theodore Roosevelt National Park in western North Dakota.

The court's decision only affects portions of the rules dealing with the two Montana coal plants.

PPL Montana — spun off last week by its parent company to form Talen Energy Corp. — had sued over the rules, saying less expensive technology would be sufficient to reduce haze-causing pollution.

Talen spokesman David Hoffman said the court's decision was a "total victory" for the Allentown, Pennsylvania-based company.

Colstrip is one of the largest coal-fired power plants in the West and produces electricity sold by utilities in Montana,



AP Photo/Matt Brown, File

This 2010 file shows the Colstrip Steam Electric Station, a coal-fired power plant in Colstrip, Mont. A federal appeals court has struck down pollution rules intended to reduce haze in the atmosphere from the burning of coal in Montana for electricity consumed across the Pacific Northwest.

Idaho, Oregon and Washington.

Hoffman said the EPA, in conjunction with environmentalists, crafted a rule designed to cost Talen money and make it more difficult for Colstrip to stay in operation.

The court's decision sends the rules back to the agency to be revised. EPA officials planned to evaluate the ruling before deciding what steps to take next, agency spokesman Richard Mylott said.

The EPA had forecast reductions of more than 12,000 tons of pollutants from Colstrip annually under its rules, at an estimated cost of \$83 million.

The regulations also have drawn a challenge from several environmental groups — the National Parks Conservation Association, Montana Environmental Information Center and Sierra Club. They said the pollution limits set by the EPA were not stringent enough.

The 9th Circuit rejected the groups' contention that the EPA should have required additional pollution-reduction technologies beyond those in the rules for two of Colstrip's four power gener-

ation units.

However, the court agreed with both PPL and the environmentalists that EPA did not adequately explain its choice of technologies for Colstrip's two older units, which Judge Diarmuid O'Scannlain described as "the heart of the dispute."

Referring to technologies costing \$25 million for sulfur dioxide reductions at the older plants, the judge wrote that "this improvement very well may be necessary and ultimately cost-effective. But EPA has supplied no reasons justifying that determination."

Representatives of the environmental groups said the ruling offered a second chance for the EPA to eliminate haze from burning coal.

"Once they take a hard look, the outcome will be in our favor," said Anne Hedges with the Montana Environmental Information Center. "We are talking about massive amounts of pollution and control equipment that's used by hundreds of plants across the country."

Special I-90 overpass will help animals cross safely

SEATTLE (AP) — Interstate 90 is a lifeline for the Northwest, connecting people and economies across the Cascades and linking the region to the rest of the country.

For wildlife, though, it's a killer — and not just because many of them wind up squashed. Multiple lanes of pavement and high-speed traffic bisect habitat more ruthlessly than any fence, isolating populations and undermining the genetic vigor that's key to long-term survival.

But part of that barrier is now being lifted.

On Tuesday, the state Department of Transportation will break ground east of Snoqualmie Pass on the state's first freeway overpass for animals. The 150-foot-long structure is designed to provide safe passage for species ranging from black bear and cougar to deer, elk — and even squirrels, mice and lizards.

It's part of an ambitious project to convert a 15-mile stretch of interstate

into one of the world's most wildlife-friendly highways.

"This is really a remarkable effort," said Patricia Garvey-Darda, a biologist for the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. "The goal is to connect all the species and all the habitat."

When finished, the section of I-90 from Hyak to Easton will incorporate more than 20 major underpasses and overpasses engineered partly or wholly with wildlife in mind. Dozens of small culverts will also be rebuilt to allow easier passage.

Four new underpasses are already open, and cameras are capturing images of deer, ducks, coyotes and river otters moving through.

"We think this is going to make a lot of difference for wildlife," said WSDOT project manager Brian White.

The wildlife structures are being piggybacked on a nearly \$1 billion project to widen I-90 from four lanes to six, straighten curves, reduce avalanche

hazards and generally improve driving conditions on one of the nation's busiest mountain highways. Some 28,000 cars traverse Snoqualmie Pass on an average weekday, and the number can more than double on sunny weekends.

Except for reducing collisions with vehicles, animals weren't especially high on WSDOT's priority list when the agency started planning the expansion more than 10 years ago. But restoring connections between wildlife populations in the North and South Cascades is a long-term goal for the U.S. Forest Service, which owns the right of way.

The area is also of keen interest to conservation groups that toiled for decades to eliminate a historic checkerboard pattern of timber ownership and bring almost 100,000 acres back into federal management.

"I-90 has a tremendous impact on wildlife in the Cascades," said Jen Watkins, of Conservation Northwest and the I-90 Wildlife Bridges Coalition.

BLOOMIN' BLUES

Wagging Hound's tongue

Name: Hound's tongue
Scientific name: *Cynoglossum officinale*

Hound's-tongue is a plant that may best be referred to as a mixed blessing. On the one hand it produces tons of burs, and on the other it has provided relief from a number of maladies on two continents. The plant is a native of Europe, where it was used for centuries or more for curing various ailments. It was brought to North America over 200 years ago and is well established across the continent as a roadside weed. Probably its least admirable trait is "cockle-burs," the seeds with hooked prickles that stick to socks by the dozen. Those seeds also get tangled in the fur of cats, dogs, and other long-haired animals.

The plant stands about 2 to 3 feet high, with lance-shaped long leaves overlapping on the central stem. The flowers are in tight coils at the ends of branches, and bloom as the coil unrolls. The flowers are a deep red-maroon nearly a half-inch across.

The name "Hound's

tongue" is probably a reference to the shape of the leaves. *Cynoglossum* is from two Greek words, "kynosi" for dog, and "glossa" for tongue, and the word "officinale" is Latin referring to official medicine. Many common names have been used for this plant in Europe and in North America, including Beggar-lice, Beggar-ticks, Canadian-bur, Dog-bur, Gipsy-flower, Mouseleaf, Rose-noble, Sheep-lice, Stick-seed, and Tory-weed.

Medicinal uses in Europe include beating the leaves with old pig grease to heal dog bites. It was said that leaves laid under the feet keep dogs from barking at you. In Vermont around 1800, a physician received a leg wound in an accident, and was successfully treated with Hound's tongue leaves by an Indian chief.

Indian tribes across the continent have used this plant to treat bleeding, cancer, sores, kidney problems, and tuberculosis.

Where to find: This plant is just now coming into bloom at middle elevations. Look for it in disturbed areas such as along the edges of roads in forest areas.



Bruce Barnes/For the East Oregonian

Hound's-tongue

Hard to forget flower

Name: Yellow and Blue Forget-me-not
Scientific name: *Myosotis discolor*

First, take a look at the photo, and be aware the plant is only three inches tall. The flowers are only about two millimeters wide.

The plant in the photo is about as tall as it gets, though it sometimes has branches. The color of the flower petals may be blue or yellow, even on the same plant. The leaves and stems are covered with soft hairs.

The name *Myosotis* is from Greek words *mys* and *ous*, for mouse and ear, combined to refer to mouse ears. Some of the 40 or so Forget-me-not species worldwide have leaves that are shaped similar to the ear of a mouse.

The word *discolor* means having different colors. Others of the 6 species in the Blue Mountains are much larger plants, some quite showy, as tall as two feet high and covered with tiny blue flowers.

The name Forget-me-not for plants in the genus *Myosotis*, is found in both French and German traditions. Whoever wore the

flowers was not forgotten by their lover. One German tale is of a knight, who having picked the flowers for his lady, slipped and fell in the river, throwing her the flowers and crying "forget me not."

Other names for these plants include mouse-ear, scorpion grass, and snake grass.

The flower buds are in a tight coil (like the tail of a scorpion), which opens as the buds start blooming from the bottom of the stem upward. Thoreau, in 1852, found forget-me-not flowers interesting. He stated, "it is the more beautiful for being small and unpretending, for even flowers should be modest."

Some eastern Indian tribes had a more practical view of the *Myosotis* plants. One tribe rubbed the plant on their hair to hold the hair in place, and another mixed it with feed to aid cows in birthing.

Where to find: This plant may be found now at middle elevations in grassy open or wooded areas of the Blue Mountains. It is fairly common but hard to spot due to its size.



Bruce Barnes/For the East Oregonian

Forget-me-not

Controlled hunt draw results available

Oregon hunters can now check to see if they drew a big game tag for the fall.

Draw results are available online at <https://or.outdoorcentral.us/or/hunterreport>, or by calling 1-866-947-6339.

Hunters will need to provide their hunter identification number, which is printed on all license documents and stays the same from year to year.

Anyone unable to locate their identification number can call the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife's licensing division at 503-947-6101.

A total of 137,015

big game hunt tags were available in the draw this year. ODFW received 407,402 hunt applications — up from 389,172 a year ago.

ODFW limits the number of tags for some hunts to control hunting pressure and distribute tags fairly for the state's most popular hunts. In Eastern Oregon, rifle deer hunting, pronghorn, bighorn sheep and Rocky Mountain goat hunts are all limited entry, as well as most rifle elk hunts.

Hunters who drew a tag are reminded to buy it no later than the day before the hunt begins.



Contributed photo, Oregon State Police

The Oregon State Police Fish and Wildlife Division is looking for whoever unlawfully wounded a buck deer in the Starkey Unit near La Grande.

Buck whitetail poached outside La Grande

East Oregonian

The Oregon State Police Fish and Wildlife Division is investigating a buck deer that was illegally shot on or before June 3 in the Starkey Unit outside La Grande.

According to Sgt. Chris Hawkins, a concerned resident reported the poaching just a couple miles off Interstate 84 and a short distance up Ladd Creek Road. The animal was mortally wounded, shot twice in the head with a .17-caliber rifle.

There are no deer hunting seasons open during this time of year.

Anyone with information about the case should call OSP's Turn-in Poachers program at 1-800-452-7888.

Callers can remain anonymous, and may be eligible for a reward offered by the Oregon Hunters Association.

Information can also be provided to OSP Senior Trooper Kris Davis in La Grande at 541-805-4757.

Hiker slips off trail, hangs from cliff for 45 minutes

PORTLAND (AP) — April Meads' first hike of the season was almost her last.

Her foot slipped while hiking with her sister Sunday at the Columbia River Gorge east of Portland.

She fell off the trail and over the side of the cliff. Her options: Find something to hold or go into a 100-foot freefall.

"As I slid down, there was one thought I had: 'My life is about to end,'" she wrote on her blog.

The 19-year-old clutched a branch that broke and started to slide again. She then quickly found a root sticking out of the cliff; it was small, but big enough to hold her for about 45 minutes until passing hikers came to the rescue.

One of them, Wim Aarts, climbed down nearby trees with a rope made from clothing.

Meads wrote that she

grabbed the clothing rope — held by several people above — and eventually returned to safety and her sister Stacy.

"I walked to her as fast as my shaking legs would let me, and I threw myself in her arms as we both began to sob on each other's shoulder," she wrote. "I had never been so happy to see her and to walk on flat ground."

Aarts praised Meads for remaining calm in a desperate situation.

"If you want to rescue someone, you want to rescue someone level-headed like she was," Aarts told *The Oregonian*.

Meads lives near Portland and recently completed her sophomore year at Linfield College. Though she escaped her brush with death, she told *The Oregonian* it hasn't escaped her dreams.

"I'm waking up kicking my legs, thinking that I'm back on the cliff," she said.

**YOU'RE INVITED TO A
MEDICARE
BIRTHDAY PARTY!**

Are you turning 65 between now and the end of September? If so, we would love to see you!

Join us for a FREE and fun event & learn more about Medicare

- The basics of Medicare
- Your rights & responsibilities
- Social Security & Disability Benefits

**Saturday, June 27
10am-1pm**

GSMC Conference Center #1

Sponsored by:
Good Shepherd Medical Center
SHIBA Office

Questions? Call 541-667-3507
or hosborne@gshealth.org