

Draft of TVA Plan on Energy Out in Fall

IRP to guide long-range goals for the agency

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Tennessee Valley Authority will review a variety of strategies to achieve the goals outlined in its 2008 Environmental Policy, according to TVA senior manager Gary Brinkworth.

A draft of the agency's Integrated Resource Planning report will be released in the fall, Brinkworth, senior manager for new generation and portfolio optimization system planning, said on Thursday at a quarterly public forum held at the TVA headquarters in Knoxville.

The strength of the projected economic recovery, the introduction of potentially game-changing technology and new government regulation will be considered in the development of a long-range energy use optimization plan, he said.

The IRP will provide options for implementing the objectives in the 2008 policy including climate change mitigation, air quality improvement, water resource protection, waste minimization, sustainable land use and natural resource management, Brinkworth said.

The IRP is a 20-year planning tool that will ensure alignment with TVA's mission of providing low-cost power, economic development, and environmental stewardship across the valley, he said.

Developing the IRP will help answer such questions as "How much energy will our customers use in the future?" and "Are additional resources needed?" Brinkworth said.

Other considerations include how alternative sources of energy might affect the future supply and demand, even how changes in government policy might affect the long-term models.

Steps in the process include identifying public concerns and translating them into scoping criteria, developing inputs and framework such as forecast of energy needs and commodity prices, analyzing and evaluating the data and modeling outputs, presenting the results to the public and incorporating public input.

The models being used are based on scenario's ranging from strong economic growth that drives both increased use and possible increased government regulation to a prolonged economic malaise that results in low to negative load growth and delayed expansion of new generations of energy technology.

"Scenarios include a number of factors that are outside of TVA's control," he said.

Political considerations include the possibility that game-changing technology could be

introduced to reduce load despite strong economic growth. If the U.S. decides to make energy independence a national goal, prices of home grown energy such as electricity and gas might rise.

Based on the demand and the number of new sources of energy available, traditional sources such as coal may be eliminated or scaled back. A nuclear focused scenario that would involve a ramp up of new nuclear plants is also included.

Public comment during the forum included concern about scaling back coal generated power and questions about TVA's use of solar power.

Margaret Johns, vice president of Bluewater Consulting, a business consultancy that focuses on renewable energy, said TVA should go through planning cycles more frequently in order to keep pace with technology.

If solar power gets down to \$1 per watt, it could have a major effect on consumer adoption, said Stephen Levy, chairman of the Tennessee Solar Energy Association. Levy said he was also concerned that the long-term potential of solar power was being evaluated based on existing technology.

Hugh G. Willett is a freelance contributor to the News Sentinel.