

BEFORE THE ILLINOIS
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

PUBLIC HEARING
REGARDING THE CLEAR AIR ACT
PERMIT PROGRAM (CAAPP)
PRAIRIE STATE GENERATING COMPANY

Transcript of videotaped proceedings
taken before HEARING OFFICER JEFFREY J. GUY,
by Sharon A. O'Donnell, CSR, within and for
the County of Cook and State of Illinois
appearing via Zoom, held at Marissa
Junior/Senior High School, 300 School View
Drive, Marissa, Illinois 62257, on
February 3, 2026 at the hour of 6:00 p.m.

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2

3 ILLINOIS ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

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9

10 ALSO PRESENT:

11 MS. SALLY CARTER, Assistant Counsel

12 MR. RYAN HENDRICKSON, Unit Manager for the
13 Clear Air Act Permit Program Unit

14

15 MR. GEOFFREY BLOOD, Permit Analyst for the
16 CAAPP Unit in the Bureau of Air Permit
17 Section

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19 MR. JOHN LEIMKUEHLER, Videographer

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1 MR. GUY: Well, good evening, everyone,
2 and thank you for being here. For the record,
3 the current time is 6:00 p.m. Central Time on
4 February 3rd, 2026.

5 On behalf of the Illinois Environmental
6 Protection Agency and its acting director,
7 James Jennings, welcome tonight. My name is
8 Jeff Guy. I am a hearing officer for the
9 Illinois EPA. We look forward to hearing your
10 comments following the Illinois EPA's opening
11 remarks. And as a courtesy to everyone in
12 attendance, please silence your cell phones and
13 other electronic devices. Also, if you wish to
14 speak tonight and have not yet registered, the
15 registration desk is in the back.

16 Tonight's proceeding is an informational
17 hearing conducted in accordance with
18 35 Illinois Administrative Code Part 166.
19 These regulations are available on the
20 Illinois Pollution Control Board's website at
21 pcb.illinois.gov.

22 My responsibility this evening is to
23 ensure that tonight's hearing runs smoothly and
24 in full compliance with these procedures. I am

1 committed to treating everyone here with
2 courtesy and respect and professionalism, and I
3 ask that everyone extend that same
4 consideration to one another. Our shared goal
5 is to maintain a constructive, respectful, and
6 welcoming environment where all voices can be
7 heard.

8 Prairie State Generating Company is
9 undergoing three permitting actions regarding
10 the coal-fired power plant located at
11 1739 Marigold Road in Marissa. The main
12 permitting action includes a new Clean Air Act
13 Permit Program, or CAAPP, for short, operating
14 permit that will consolidate all applicable
15 requirements of the Federal Clean Air Act and
16 the Illinois Environmental Protection Act.

17 Additionally, the CAAPP permit will roll
18 in the terms and conditions of issued permits,
19 most notably the Prevention of Significant
20 Deterioration, or PSD for short, and state
21 construction permit that the Illinois EPA
22 issued to Prairie State in April of 2005.

23 Permitting actions also include a
24 revision to a term of the PSD and state

1 construction permit in the CAAPP permit and the
2 processing of a Clean Air Act Acid Rain Permit.
3 Illinois EPA Bureau of Air staff will provide
4 more information on these permitting actions
5 momentarily.

6 Following a review of the applicable
7 materials submitted by Prairie State, the
8 Illinois EPA has made the preliminary
9 determination that the permits should be
10 granted. Draft permits are now available for
11 public review.

12 Written comments may be submitted until
13 the close of the public comment period at
14 11:59 p.m. Central Time on March 9th, 2026.
15 All correspondence should reference
16 Prairie State Generating Company, LLC.
17 Comments may be submitted to the Illinois EPA
18 by mail or e-mail. Instructions for submitting
19 written comments, including the e-mail and
20 mailing addresses, can be found in the public
21 notice at the registration desk and also on the
22 Illinois EPA Bureau of Air Permit public
23 notice's web page.

24 In addition to tonight's public hearing,

1 the Illinois EPA will hold two additional
2 virtual public hearings this Thursday,
3 February 5th, at 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. via
4 Webex. All matters will be covered at all
5 hearings. Information regarding the online
6 public hearings, including the Webex links, the
7 associated passwords, and more information can
8 be found in that public notice that I
9 mentioned.

10 After the record closes, the Illinois
11 EPA will prepare a responsiveness summary,
12 which will be posted on the Bureau of Air
13 Permit public notice's web page. This summary
14 will include a summary of the public comments
15 received, oral and written, the Agency's
16 responses, and a statement of the Agency's
17 final action. People who complete the
18 registration card or submit written comments
19 will be notified of the final decision and the
20 availability of the responsiveness summary.

21 We will begin with introductions from
22 Illinois EPA staff, followed by a brief
23 overview of the draft permits and their key
24 provisions. Afterwards, I will provide

1 detailed instructions for participating in the
2 public comment portion of the hearing.

3 MS. CARTER: Good evening. I'm
4 Sally Carter, and I am assistant counsel for
5 the Illinois EPA.

6 MR. HENDRICKSON: Good evening. I would
7 first like to thank the school here for
8 hosting us here tonight.

9 My name is Ryan Hendrickson. I am
10 the CAAPP Unit Manager for the Bureau of Air
11 Permit Section. Thank you for attending
12 this public hearing regarding three permit
13 transactions, the first one being the new
14 draft CAAPP permit for Prairie State
15 Generating Station, referred to as
16 Prairie State, which includes the second
17 transaction, a revision to a term of the
18 underlying Prevention of Significant
19 Deterioration, PSD, and state construction
20 permit, which is in the CAAPP permit, as
21 well as a third transaction, the processing
22 of a Clean Air Act Acid Rain Permit,
23 contained, once again, within the draft
24 CAAPP permit.

1 As the Hearing Officer has stated,
2 we are here this evening to take comments on
3 these three permitting actions. As such, I
4 would like to give a brief overview of the
5 CAAPP program, the revision to the term in
6 the PSD permit, and the Acid Rain Permit.
7 Then Geoffrey will discuss more about
8 Prairie State and the draft CAAPP permit.

9 The main permitting action for this
10 public hearing is the planned issuance of
11 the CAAPP permit for Prairie State. The
12 CAAPP program, or what may commonly be
13 referred to as the Title V program, requires
14 that a single operating permit be issued to
15 address all applicable requirements for the
16 various emission units and activities at a
17 major stationary source.

18 A benefit of the CAAPP permits over
19 other operating permits is that compliance
20 methods, meaning the provisions for
21 monitoring, testing, and recordkeeping, are
22 developed when an applicable requirement
23 does not already require adequate periodic
24 testing or monitoring. This assures that a

1 source can reasonably demonstrate its
2 ability to comply with emission limits and
3 standards.

4 Additionally, there are more
5 reporting requirements to provide for source
6 accountability, which also provides the
7 means for the United States Environmental
8 Protection Agency, or US EPA, as well as the
9 public, to enforce the terms of the permit.

10 For a CAAPP permit to become final
11 and effective, it must be posted for public
12 comment and reviewed by the US EPA. The
13 US EPA may object to the permit if any of
14 the terms and conditions in the permit are
15 not consistent with the CAAPP requirements
16 in the Illinois Environmental Protection
17 Act.

18 The second permitting action is one
19 revision to the underlying PSD and state
20 construction permit which Illinois EPA
21 issued to Prairie State in April of 2005.
22 One of the terms of the PSD permit set an
23 emission limit for each coal-fired boiler of
24 0.035 pounds per million British Thermal

1 Units, or pounds per million BTU, for
2 particulate matter with a diameter of
3 10 microns or less, known as PM10.

4 However, the permit allowed for
5 later consideration by the Illinois EPA of
6 whether the units could meet a more
7 stringent limit, but no lower than
8 0.018 pounds per million BTU, which is
9 roughly half of the original limit. The
10 emission limit reflects a prior
11 demonstration of Best Available Control
12 Technology, known as BACT, which is an
13 important feature of the PSD program.

14 Based on the facility's emission
15 data, the Illinois EPA has determined that
16 Prairie State can meet a more stringent
17 emission limit of 0.018 pounds per million
18 BTU, and is, therefore, revising the PSD
19 permit through the CAAPP procedures for this
20 draft CAAPP permit. Consistent with the
21 terms of the PSD permit, corresponding
22 hourly and annual limits for the PM10 would
23 also be lowered in kind. There are no other
24 changes to the PSD permit.

1 Finally, the third permitting
2 action addresses Prairie State's obligation
3 to hold a permit under the Clean Air Act's
4 Acid Rain Program. The draft Acid Rain
5 Permit, contained within the CAAPP permit,
6 addresses the two coal-fired boilers
7 operating at this plant because they are
8 affected electric generating units, EGUs,
9 and emit both sulfur dioxide and nitrogen
10 oxides. These pollutants are the main
11 precursors of acid rain.

12 The Acid Rain Permit requires a
13 source to hold SO2 allowances to account for
14 the SO2 emissions of the boilers. An
15 allowance is a limited authorization to emit
16 one ton of SO2 on or after a given calendar
17 year. The draft Acid Rain Permit also
18 addresses the limit that applies to the
19 emissions of nitrogen oxides from the
20 boilers. The draft Acid Rain Permit also
21 contains emissions monitoring and reporting
22 requirements for both pollutants under the
23 Acid Rain Program.

24 I will now turn it over to

1 Geoffrey Blood, who will provide some
2 general information about Prairie State, as
3 well as a draft CAAPP permit.

4 MR. BLOOD: Good evening. My name is
5 Geoffrey Blood, and I am a Permit Analyst
6 for the CAAPP unit in the Bureau of Air
7 Permit Section. Thank you for attending
8 this public hearing regarding the planned
9 issuance of the CAAPP permit for
10 Prairie State Generating Station.

11 I would like to give a brief
12 overview of Prairie State Generating
13 Station, or Prairie State. Prairie State is
14 a mine-mouth coal-fired steam electric
15 generating station with a nominal capacity
16 of 1,600 megawatts which commenced
17 construction in 2007. The facility consists
18 of an underground coal mine, power plant,
19 and coal combustion residuals disposal
20 facility. The main generating units
21 comprising Prairie State are coal-fired
22 steam boilers, referred to as Unit 1 and
23 Unit 2. Additional emissions units at the
24 source include a natural gas-fired auxiliary

1 boiler, cooling towers, haul roads, material
2 transfer plants, transfer points at the coal
3 mine, coal combustion residuals disposal
4 facility, and storage silos.

5 Prairie State requires a CAAPP
6 permit because the Unit 1 and Unit 2
7 coal-fired boilers are subject to acid rain
8 deposition control and because the source
9 exceeds the major source threshold for
10 particulate matter, also known as PM,
11 sulphur dioxide, or SO₂, volatile organic
12 material, or VOM, carbon monoxide, or CO,
13 nitrogen oxide, or NO_x, and hazardous air
14 pollutants, or HAPS.

15 The coal-fired boilers are subject
16 to the New Source Performance Standards, or
17 NSPS, for electric utility steam-generating
18 units, designated as subpart DA, and the
19 National Emissions Standards for Hazardous
20 Air Pollutants, or NESHAP, for coal-fired
21 electric utility steam generating units,
22 designated as Subpart UUUUU, also known as
23 five U's.

24 The auxiliary board is subject to

1 the NSPS, or
2 industrial-commercial-institutional
3 steam-generating units designated as
4 Subpart DB, and the NESHAP or HAP major
5 sources with industrial, commercial, and
6 institutional boilers designated as
7 Subpart DDDDD, also known as five D's.

8 The bulk material handling,
9 processing, and storage operations are
10 subject to the NSPS for coal preparation and
11 processing plants, designated as Subpart Y,
12 and the NSPS for nonmetallic mineral
13 processing plants, designated as
14 Subpart OOO, also known as triple O.

15 Prairie State was issued a state
16 construction permit and PSD approval on
17 April 28th, 2005. The permit authorized
18 Prairie State to construct its plant.
19 Prairie State timely submitted an
20 application for a CAAPP permit in 2010. The
21 construction permit, in conjunction with
22 Prairie State's timely submittal of a
23 complete CAAPP application and subsequent
24 updates to the application, authorizes

1 Prairie State to operate the plant until a
2 CAAPP permit is issued, as authorized by the
3 Illinois Environmental Protection Act.

4 An issued CAAPP permit grants
5 authority for continued operation and has a
6 five-year term. The Illinois EPA has
7 prepared the draft CAAPP permit and is now
8 presenting it to the public for review.

9 Additional details regarding the
10 source and the draft CAAPP permit are
11 contained in the Statement of Basis that
12 accompanies the draft CAAPP permit on the
13 Illinois EPA's public notice web page.

14 I would now like to transition back
15 to Jeff Guy, who will discuss more about the
16 hearing.

17 MR. GUY: Thank you, Geoffrey and Ryan.

18 This hearing is being held to
19 gather public comments on the draft permits
20 for inclusion in the official hearing
21 record. All comments provided tonight will
22 be carefully reviewed and considered as part
23 of the decision-making process. Illinois
24 EPA staff will be available during the

1 hearing to listen to comments and provide
2 responses, when possible. However, some
3 questions may require additional review
4 before a complete answer can be given. When
5 information is readily available, our staff
6 will address comments during the hearing.
7 Otherwise, responses will be included in the
8 responsiveness summary.

9 We want everyone here tonight to
10 feel comfortable, respected, and heard. To
11 maintain a constructive and courteous
12 environment, please keep comments focused on
13 these draft permits. This portion of the
14 hearing is designed for public comments, not
15 for debate, demands for immediate answers,
16 or extended dialogue with Illinois EPA
17 staff. Personal attacks, foul language, and
18 off-topic comments are not allowed. If
19 discussion begins to move in that direction,
20 I may step in and ask the person to return
21 to their next relevant point.

22 Also, disruptive behavior, such as
23 shouting, booing, heckling, or other
24 interruptions will not be tolerated this

1 evening. If that occurs, the hearing may be
2 paused, or, if necessary, ended early.

3 Individuals who engage in disruptive conduct
4 may be asked to leave to ensure the hearing
5 proceeds fairly and orderly. If the hearing
6 should end early, written comments will
7 still be accepted through the close of the
8 comment period.

9 A videographer is present to my
10 right, and a remote court reporter will
11 create the official record of this hearing.
12 In addition, tonight's hearing is being
13 audio-recorded. To help ensure a clear and
14 accurate record, please minimize background
15 noise and, as I mentioned, silence your
16 phones and avoid side conversations.

17 For a respectful and orderly
18 proceeding, direct all comments up here to
19 this hearing panel, please, and not to other
20 members of the public. When speaking,
21 please use the microphone. Speak loudly and
22 clearly so your remarks are accurately
23 captured by both the remote court reporter
24 and the recording devices. And before

1 speaking, please state your name, for the
2 record.

3 Speakers will be called in the
4 order of registration. When called, please
5 state and spell your name for the record.
6 If you represent an organization, please
7 identify it. Otherwise, you may simply
8 state that you are a concerned citizen or a
9 resident, something like that.

10 To ensure everyone has an
11 opportunity to speak this evening, we're
12 going to limit comments to five minutes at
13 this time; but if time allows after all
14 registered speakers, we may invite
15 additional comments. If, for whatever
16 reason, you don't get a chance to speak this
17 evening, just remember that written comments
18 are equally important and will be fully
19 considered.

20 As a reminder, tonight's discussion
21 will focus exclusively on the technical
22 issues, terms, and conditions of the draft
23 permits. And, again, we ask that all
24 comments remain relevant and respectful.

1 So with that, I'm going to call
2 Ross Bunton, from Prairie State Generating,
3 and that will be followed by Joyce
4 Blumenshine.

5 MR. BUNTON: Good evening. Thank you
6 for the opportunity to speak today.

7 My name is Ross Bunton. I'm the
8 Environmental Director at the Prairie State
9 Energy Campus. Today I'm speaking on behalf
10 of our 650 employees, our not-for-profit
11 public power owners, and the more than 1,000
12 union tradesmen and women that support our
13 campus operations.

14 Prairie State Energy Campus is
15 located in Washington County, Illinois.
16 It's comprised of a 1600-megawatt coal-fired
17 power plant and adjacent underground coal
18 mine. The Illinois EPA first issued
19 Prairie State a Provision of Significant
20 Deterioration, or PSD permit, in April
21 of 2005, which set very stringent
22 environmental standards for our facility and
23 with which we've been proud to comply.

24 Prairie State came online during

1 the Obama-Biden administration in 2012 after
2 having been purpose built with over a
3 billion dollars worth of best available
4 control technology and a supercritical
5 boiler, making Prairie State the most
6 efficient coal-fired power plant in Illinois
7 and one of the most efficient in the
8 country.

9 Prairie State is wholly owned by
10 not-for-profit municipalities and rural
11 electric cooperatives located across
12 Illinois and seven other midwestern states.
13 Our energy campus provides a stable source
14 of affordable base-load power to dozens of
15 communities across Illinois. Collectively
16 our owners serve more than 2.5 million
17 families and businesses. While other forms
18 of electricity depend on conditions like
19 weather and wind, base-load power generated
20 by Prairie State is always readily available
21 24/7. That means when temperatures spike or
22 plummet, our facility is there to ensure
23 that families stay safe with reliable,
24 affordable electricity.

1 Despite our investment in
2 technology and history of environmental
3 compliance and sustainability, others
4 continue to put forth misinformation about
5 our facility. I want to ensure that the
6 record recognizes that Prairie State
7 produces significantly more electricity than
8 every other fossil plant in the state, and
9 we do so more efficiently, effectively
10 producing more electricity per ton of coal
11 than any other plant in the state. That
12 means that Prairie State gets better gas
13 mileage, so to speak, than any other coal
14 plant in Illinois.

15 Illinois is headed towards a steep
16 energy deficit. A recent report by the
17 Illinois Power Agency, Illinois
18 Environmental Protection Agency, and
19 Illinois Commerce Commission warns that
20 regional grid operators serving Illinois
21 will see electricity shortages as soon as
22 2029 because other facilities have been
23 forced to close, even as demand increases.
24 That makes the dispatchable base-load power

1 provided by Prairie State even more
2 critical, as Illinois transitions to a
3 greater energy future.

4 To that end, we are pleased to see
5 our Title V application moving forward. As
6 a facility wholly owned by public power, we
7 continuously seek to implement operational
8 improvements in cooperation with state and
9 federal regulators, and we remain dedicated
10 to working with the agency towards the
11 issuance of a final Title V permit that
12 accurately reflects the stringent state and
13 federal laws and regulations applicable to
14 our campus, while at the same time ensuring
15 that we can continue providing value to the
16 communities we serve, creating jobs, and
17 economic prosperity throughout downstate
18 Illinois.

19 Thank you for your time today.

20 MR. GUY: Thank you, Ross.

21 Joyce Blumenshine.

22 MS. BLUMENSHINE: Good day. My -- good
23 evening. My name is Joyce Blumenshine. I'm
24 here from Peoria, Illinois because of

1 concerns for our families and our future.

2 I'm a Sierra Club volunteer, and I had just
3 a couple comments and questions.

4 First off, I want to give my
5 sincerest thanks to IEPA for being here
6 tonight and listening to us in this public
7 forum, because in this day and age having a
8 chance to interact with agency people of our
9 state government is really special, and it's
10 very important for our future and for the
11 well-being of everyone. So thank you very
12 much. And I also respect the untold number
13 of hours IEPA works on these permits and the
14 diligence and time you put in. Again, it's
15 not often mentioned, but I want to recognize
16 that tonight.

17 So permits like this are personal
18 to me. My father died of lung cancer, my
19 mother of COPD. I would not wish the tragic
20 times and agony of my parents or families to
21 anyone, but unfortunately cancers happen,
22 and we know that many of the particulates
23 and materials from the Prairie State
24 Generating Facility are toxic, especially to

1 human health, in minute amounts.

2 So I want to thank you to IEPA for
3 revising the Prevention of Significant
4 Deterioration permit to reduce the PM10 air
5 particulate release limits from .035 to
6 .018 pounds per million British Thermal
7 Units for each boiler. That is a
8 significant drop to me, as a nonscientific
9 person, and I just ask IEPA to please
10 strengthen any of the other limit amounts
11 that in your final reviews and after
12 consideration of comments that you can see
13 to reduce, because the concern is for not
14 only this immediate area but for our state
15 and our nation and the globe, are the
16 ongoing huge amounts of global greenhouse
17 gases and other pollution from this plant.

18 So the draft permit, in my
19 volunteer reading, includes the nearby
20 Lively Grove coal mine and the coal
21 combustion residuals from that mine, and I
22 am very concerned about methane releases
23 from the coal mine, because methane has 25
24 times more global warming impact than carbon

1 dioxide. And I want to just refer a little
2 bit more to the mine.

3 I do have a question first off. Am
4 I correct that the mine itself is part of
5 this overall review of Prairie State?

6 MR. HENDRICKSON: The mine is not
7 directly included in this CAAPP permit that
8 we're talking about here today.

9 MS. BLUMENSHINE: Okay. Well, thank you
10 very much, Mr. Hendrickson. I appreciate
11 that, because in the overall, you know,
12 mentioning of the Prairie State facility
13 it's a mine-mouth facility, which is kind of
14 unique, at least for here in Illinois, and I
15 just was curious.

16 I do want to just make a few very
17 brief comments about the mine, and then I'll
18 go into the air permit. And I didn't set my
19 watch, so please flag me for time.

20 A 2017 U.S. Mine Safety and Health
21 Administration docket regarding the
22 Lively Grove mine includes that the Herrin
23 No. 6 coal seam with the mine is where the
24 coal comes from, and that the mine has an

1 intake air shaft, return air shaft, two
2 exhausting fans, and the daily production
3 averages 22,000 tons per minute of coal in
4 three shifts, and the wording from the Mine
5 Safety and Health Administration says the
6 mine liberates 370 -- I'm sorry, 371,367, so
7 that's 371,367 cubic feet per minute of
8 methane in 24 hours.

9 I just want to lift this up, and
10 I'll turn in written comments with the
11 source for that, but this mine produces a
12 lot of methane. To my knowledge, the mine
13 measures that for the mine safety and
14 health, but as far as including it in the
15 total harmful impacts from this site, I just
16 feel that there is a lack of holistic
17 consideration, a lack of holistic
18 consideration for not only public health but
19 the air overall of what is going into the
20 air of this area.

21 And then if you look at the 12-mile
22 radius around the plant, it includes the
23 Kickapoo State Fish and Wildlife Recreation
24 Area. People hunt, fish, hike, picnic. All

1 ages are out there enjoying nature, and this
2 added particulates and then considering
3 Prairie State, it just seems like that
4 people's health could be really a concern.

5 The mine produces about 6.9 million
6 tons of coal annually, and its discharges go
7 to Mud Creek and also the Kaskaskia River,
8 which is also impacted by Prairie State.
9 So, again, these are cumulative impacts I
10 feel I really wish would be included in the
11 reviews in the future.

12 So the CAAPP air permit talks about
13 the coal ash. Originally the coal ash
14 by-products from the Prairie State plant go
15 to -- went to the Jordan mine. So that was
16 disposed of in a mine site.

17 Now they are going to this huge
18 coal ash landfill, I'll call it, but it's
19 more like a toxic hazardous waste dump,
20 because we know the residuals of coal ash
21 are hazardous for many, many years in the
22 future. This will continue to grow, and it
23 will continue to be a ticking toxic time
24 bomb for the area.

1 I just wish to ask that at some
2 point a wider consideration could be made
3 for the future impacts, because here we have
4 not only coal ash in several different
5 locations, but we have farmland, we have
6 proximity to a state recreation area, public
7 waterways, and we have all of this toxic
8 material piling up for future generations.
9 That will be left, the cost will be left,
10 the health impacts will be left, and it
11 seems like these coal ash landfills should
12 be regulated as hazardous waste landfills.
13 I hope that in the future IEPA will look at
14 that and consider the best, highest
15 available technology for these, including
16 leachate collection, including the total
17 surroundings for that with the highest
18 quality HDPE and many layers of covers, not
19 only liners but covers, as hazardous waste
20 landfills and the other protections of
21 hazardous waste landfills.

22 So in closing I want to thank you
23 for your time, and that the amount of this
24 plant's pollution for future generations is

1 humongous for our area and for the climate
2 and for the future of all of us. I hope
3 that, in looking ahead, IEPA will further
4 look at how reducing greenhouse gases and
5 other harmful pollution from Prairie State
6 generating facility can be accomplished.

7 Again, thank you very much.

8 MR. GUY: Thank you, Joyce. I
9 appreciate that.

10 Justin Gale, followed by
11 Seth Speiser or Speiser. Sorry if I'm
12 mispronouncing anyone's name. Justin,
13 followed by Seth, and then Kay, last name
14 A-H-A-U-S.

15 MR. GALE: Good evening. My name is
16 Justin Gale, and I currently serve as the
17 warehouse manager at Prairie State.

18 I started working at Prairie State
19 in 2010 during construction, and it has been
20 amazing to see the campus be built from the
21 ground up to now one of the best coal mines
22 and coal-fired power plants in the country.
23 Prairie State has been more than just a job
24 for me. It has turned into a career. I

1 started as a technician at the power plant
2 warehouse and have worked my way up to
3 managing the warehouses at both the power
4 plant and the mine. Prairie State has
5 offered me professional growth
6 opportunities, competitive pay, and good
7 benefits that help me to provide for my
8 family, things that are often hard to find
9 close to home in rural areas like this.

10 I have lived my entire life in this
11 area and attended high school in the very
12 building we are sitting in for this hearing.
13 I care about this community and the quality
14 of life for those of us that live or can
15 play here.

16 One of our company values at
17 Prairie State is sustainability. I, as an
18 avid outdoorsman, also care about
19 sustainability and minimizing our
20 environmental impact. We look beyond the
21 events of today to ensure success for the
22 future, and we hold ourselves accountable to
23 meeting regulatory requirements and
24 achieving the results we have committed to.

1 We do this each day at Prairie State because
2 there are 2.5 million people counting on us
3 to show up, to do the right thing, and to
4 provide reliable and affordable electricity
5 24/7, 365.

6 Our owners invested \$5 billion in
7 this campus just a little over a decade ago,
8 with 1 billion of that solely in emissions
9 control technologies, and they have
10 entrusted the Prairie State team with that
11 investment. It's fulfilling to work at a
12 company that prioritizes good stewardship,
13 while providing a vital service on behalf of
14 the municipalities and rural electric
15 cooperatives that own Prairie State.

16 I think I can speak for the other
17 employees here tonight, along with the 650
18 employees that proudly work at Prairie
19 State, when I say we depend on this campus
20 for our livelihoods and our families'
21 futures. But we also understand the larger
22 impact our work has throughout the state. I
23 hope our presence here tonight is a reminder
24 of the people behind the power, and that we

1 are able to continue to do the important
2 work we all do. Thank you for your time.

3 MR. GUY: Thank you. And that was
4 Justin Gale, J-U-S-T-I-N, G-A-L-E, for the
5 record, and then prior to that was Joyce
6 Blumenshine, J-O-Y-C-E,
7 B-L-U-M-E-N-S-H-I-N-E, and our first speaker
8 was Ross Bunton, B-U-N-T-O-N.

9 Seth, take the mic away.

10 MR. SPEISER: Thank you, sir.

11 Hello. My name is Seth Speiser,
12 S-E-T-H, S-P-E-I-S-E-R, and I am honored to
13 serve as the mayor of the village of
14 Freeburg. On behalf of our residents, I am
15 here today to share how Prairie State
16 Generating Company has proven to be a vital
17 asset to our community and a responsible,
18 generous neighbor.

19 Prairie State is a nonprofit power
20 plant owned by nine power agencies serving
21 communities across eight states, including
22 Freeburg. This cooperative model provides
23 our residents with reliable, affordable
24 electricity. As a base-load generation

1 source, Prairie State supplies power around
2 the clock, regardless of the weather
3 conditions, helping shield our community for
4 market instability and major rate hikes.

5 At a time when families are facing
6 rising costs and inflation, this
7 affordability truly matters. Reliability is
8 just as important during the winter storms.
9 The wind and solar resources struggle under
10 blizzard-like conditions. Prairie State
11 continued to deliver dependable power. That
12 reliability ensures family and businesses
13 have the heat, light, and electricity they
14 need to stay safe. We are grateful not to
15 question whether the power will be available
16 when it matters most, and I want to thank
17 the hard working men and women of Prairie
18 State, several of them who are here tonight,
19 for making that possible.

20 Prairie State is focused on the
21 future. Operating under strict
22 environmental standards, it is one of the
23 newest and most efficient coal-fired power
24 plants in the country. Its owners have

1 invested more than a billion in advanced
2 emission control technologies, allowing
3 Prairie State to produce more electricity
4 per ton of coal than any other power plant
5 in the state of Illinois. This reduces
6 emissions and limits the need to import
7 power from older, less efficient facilities.
8 Prairie State has continued to pursue ways
9 to reduce its carbon footprint while
10 maintaining sustainable operations.

11 The economic impact of
12 Prairie State is significant. It employs
13 more than 600 full-time workers and supports
14 over a thousand union tradesmen and women.
15 Each area contributes to more than
16 785 million to the economy through wages,
17 local vendors, and tax revenue. Every
18 dollar Prairie State pays is a dollar our
19 residents don't have to pay.

20 Beyond that, Prairie State gives
21 back through community programs such as
22 student mentorships, food drives, and
23 holiday gift drives. Last year Freeburg
24 Community High School received a classroom

1 impact grant to support its advanced
2 manufacturing and 3D printing program.
3 Prairie State has consistently demonstrated
4 that it is a cornerstone of our region
5 through jobs, community investment, and
6 reliable energy.

7 I respectfully ask that you adopt
8 sensible regulations that allow Prairie
9 State to continue this important work.
10 Thank you.

11 MR. GUY: Thank you, Seth.

12 Next is Kay Ahaus, followed by
13 Tom Prost.

14 MS. AHAUS: Good evening, and thank you
15 for being here and letting me speak tonight.

16 I come as a former healthcare
17 provider. I treated many people with
18 chronic pulmonary disease, and I can tell
19 you that some of them worked in coal mines.
20 I live near Trenton, Illinois, so I'm not
21 immediately in the area, but I feel for the
22 people who do live down here, and I know how
23 important tax base is and this plant is to
24 that tax base. I know how important it is

1 to have a good employer.

2 But my argument, as a captive
3 ratepayer and a taxpayer, is that I am
4 forced to buy this dirty electricity by my
5 provider, when I would really prefer to buy
6 a cleaner, healthier energy source. I don't
7 see why that can't happen here at
8 Prairie State. But that's not what we are
9 talking about tonight, but I just want to
10 respond to the people that I have agreed
11 with everything everybody said so far. I
12 just think we're here to talk about
13 pollution, and that's what I want to talk
14 about.

15 By far Prairie State coal is the
16 blackest mark on our state and, in fact, it
17 is one of the worst ten polluters in the
18 whole nation. As I've said, I would buy my
19 electricity in a heartbeat, if I was given
20 the choice, but I'm not. But I want
21 electricity made from clean, reliable,
22 please hear the word reliable, energy, like
23 solar and wind, which will require battery
24 storage.

1 I am profoundly angry at IEPA for
2 waiting 14 years, letting these people
3 construct this plant and operate without a
4 Clean Air Act Permit. Clearly the Title V
5 of the Clean Air Act requires that you not
6 allow Prairie State to run without holding
7 them to the basic requirements under the
8 law, to operate only when an air permit is
9 enforced.

10 I'm just confused and don't
11 understand why it has taken 14 years, a
12 thousand deaths from this plant to have this
13 hearing. 72 -- 76 of us die a year from
14 lung disease, cardiac disease, and possibly
15 cancer because of this plant. Prairie State
16 spews sulfur dioxide, nitrous oxide,
17 particulate matter, and other carcinogens in
18 huge amounts, and we have to breathe the air
19 that it -- of which these are polluting.

20 I ask you to hold this huge black
21 sheep accountable to the greatest extent of
22 the law. Make Prairie State record and make
23 public the exact amounts of the pollution
24 they create, and, please, don't ever again

1 neglect to enforce the Clean Air Act with
2 just a construction permit. That's not
3 right.

4 And to the owners of Prairie State,
5 who I assume some of them are here tonight,
6 I really think that you need to clean up
7 your act. You need to obey the law, to be
8 in compliance with basic requirements of a
9 good employer, a good business, and a good
10 neighbor. And if you care about your
11 employees, I think this plant is due to
12 close in less than 20 years, so you should
13 help them plan for their future by
14 reeducating them to work in the clean energy
15 possibilities that could be here at Prairie
16 State Campus.

17 To the ratepayers and taxpayers, I
18 say we need to hold IEPA and Prairie State
19 accountable for the egregious lack of work
20 that they have done and the amount of
21 pollution that they have created. Let's
22 insist that they stop.

23 I would ask that Governor Pritzker
24 and your state representatives know how you

1 are disappointed with them for not holding
2 these players accountable to the minimum
3 standards. I realize that these are not
4 pleasant remarks, but I do thank you for the
5 opportunity to let me give them.

6 MR. GUY: Thank you, Kay.

7 And next is Tom Prost, P-R-O-S-T,
8 followed by Amanda, last name P-A-N-K-A-U.

9 MR. PROST: Good evening. My name is
10 Tom Prost. I live in Waterloo. I grew up
11 in Belleville. I'm a grandfather of two and
12 a great-grandfather of four.

13 When I was a kid in the 1960's,
14 every morning my dad got up early and
15 shoveled coal into our furnace so the house
16 would be warm. We had a pile of coal in the
17 basement delivered through a chute in a
18 window. Coal dust was everywhere, and ash
19 cans had to be hauled outside. It was
20 simply the work of keeping a family
21 comfortable through the winter. That memory
22 isn't nostalgia. It's a reminder of how
23 closely everyday life used to be tied to
24 coal and to the smoke that came with it.

1 St. Louis has a long history with
2 coal smoke. Long before the 1960's the city
3 struggled with intense air pollution from
4 burning bituminous coal. In November 1939,
5 during Black Tuesday, the smog was so thick
6 that streetlights stayed on all day and
7 visibility dropped sharply. People could
8 see it, they could smell it, they could feel
9 it in their lungs. Events like that forced
10 St. Louis to confront air pollution long
11 before federal environmental regulations
12 existed. Thankfully, we have made real
13 progress.

14 Our air is cleaner than when I was
15 growing up, and it is important to remember
16 that progress didn't happen by accident. It
17 happened because standards and oversight
18 improved. It has been nearly 60 years since
19 my dad had to shovel coal every morning, yet
20 today we're still dealing with large coal
21 facilities whose emissions affect the air we
22 all breathe.

23 Prairie State emits over 11 million
24 tons of carbon dioxide a year, contributing

1 to climate change my grandchildren will live
2 with. It also emits thousands of tons of
3 sulfur dioxide, which contribute to
4 respiratory and cardiovascular stress,
5 especially for children, the elderly, and
6 people with asthma and heart disease.

7 Mercury emissions enter the environment and
8 food chains, harming developing brains,
9 especially in babies and young children.

10 I'm also concerned that this plant
11 has operated for approximately 14 years
12 without a valid operating permit. A gap
13 that long reminds us that oversight only
14 works when it's continuous and vigilant.

15 When attention drifts, the public
16 quietly bears the risk. As a grandfather
17 and great-grandfather, I ask you to evaluate
18 these permits, not only with regard to
19 technical compliance checklists, but also
20 the broader responsibility we care, to
21 public health, to our neighbors, and
22 especially to future generations.

23 In conclusion, St. Louis was an
24 early witness to the real cost of coal

1 pollution. We honor that history, not by
2 looking back with relief, but by making sure
3 our decisions today reflect what we've
4 learned and by refusing to repeat mistakes
5 we have learned how to avoid. Thank you.

6 MR. GUY: Thank you, Tom.

7 Next is Amanda, last name
8 P-A-N-K-A-U, followed by Aline Russell, and
9 that's A-L-I-N-E, R-U-S-S-E-L-L, for the
10 record.

11 MS. PANKAU: Thank you. Good evening.
12 My name is Amanda Pankau, and I am the
13 Director of Energy and Community Resiliency
14 with the nonprofit Prairie Rivers Network.
15 Thank you for the opportunity to speak, and
16 thank you for finally taking action to issue
17 the long overdue Clean Air Act operating
18 permit for the Prairie State General
19 Station.

20 I do want to begin by acknowledging
21 the economic impact of the plant and the
22 jobs that it provides, particularly in a
23 rural part of Illinois, where good paying
24 employment matters. In fact, Illinois is

1 leading the nation in supporting coal
2 communities and workers that have been
3 impacted by the decline of coal. Most of my
4 job is actually spent helping rural coal
5 communities access funding and opportunity
6 when a coal mine closes or a plant closes.
7 This issue cannot be framed as a jobs versus
8 the environment and public health situation.

9 When a plant is this large and
10 consequential, like the Prairie State coal
11 plant, it has a responsibility to operate
12 with the best pollution controls available
13 and to consistently meet or exceed its legal
14 obligations to protect public health and the
15 environment. And, yet, for the last
16 14 years the Prairie State coal plant, the
17 largest stationary source of air pollution
18 in Illinois, has operated without the
19 regulatory oversight and enforcement
20 necessary.

21 The coal plant has emitted
22 9,280 tons of sulfur dioxide in 2023. Even
23 short-term exposure to SO₂ can irritate the
24 lungs, trigger asthma attacks, and make it

1 harder to breathe, especially in children
2 and older adults and people with existing
3 heart and lung disease.

4 SO2 also contributes to the
5 formation of fine particulate matter, which
6 is linked to heart attacks, strokes, and
7 premature death.

8 Prairie State does have pollution
9 controls, but they can do better, and they
10 should do better. In fact, the National
11 Park Service has raised serious concerns
12 about sulphur dioxide pollution from the
13 Prairie State coal plant.

14 In the regional haze state
15 implementation plan, the NPS shared
16 extensive concern and recommendations for
17 action on SO2 at this plant. They found
18 that Prairie State's SO2 emissions to be
19 high for a coal plant equipped with wet
20 scrubbers. They noted many similar coal
21 plants across the country that are achieving
22 much lower emissions.

23 Specifically, the NPS urges the
24 state to identify opportunities to reduce

1 SO2 emissions through optimization or
2 upgrades to the units. They estimated that
3 the plant could remove an additional
4 3,800 tons of SO2 per year at a reasonable
5 cost. This would be a significant reduction
6 of over a third of their SO2 emissions.

7 The National Park Service also
8 noted that Prairie State's own scrubbers
9 have achieved lower emission rates in the
10 past, showing that further reductions are
11 technically achievable. In short, their
12 recommendations were clear. More SO2
13 reductions are possible, and Illinois should
14 require them.

15 The National Park Service actually
16 was not alone in their concern about the
17 massive amounts of CO2 being released from
18 the Prairie State coal plant. In the SIP
19 the State of Arkansas similarly asked IEPA
20 to consider whether any additional control
21 measures for SO2 or nitrogen oxides at the
22 plant could be considered.

23 In addition to pollution controls,
24 to further reduce pollution -- oh, sorry.

1 If additional pollution controls are
2 possible to further reduce pollution, they
3 should be required in the operating permit.

4 So the question doesn't have to be
5 answered tonight, but in the responsiveness
6 summary I am curious to know if the draft
7 operating permit requires any additional SO2
8 pollution controls like those suggested by
9 the National Park Service in the SIP.

10 Furthermore, we must ensure
11 existing pollution controls at the plant are
12 functioning as they should be to avoid
13 violations. In the last five years the
14 plant has been issued four different
15 violation notices related to air pollution.
16 These violations include exceedances of
17 their emission limits for mercury, SO2, and
18 particulate matter. So I'm also curious if
19 the current draft permit addresses these
20 past exceedances to understand how they
21 happened, to ensure that they do not happen
22 again, or become more common as the plant
23 ages.

24 And this air permit is not the only

1 environmental permit or regulation that the
2 Prairie State coal plant has fallen short on
3 complying with. Surface water, groundwater,
4 and coal ash are concerns at this mine and
5 plant as well.

6 The coal plant has reported
7 noncompliance with their state water
8 discharge NPDS permit in five out of the
9 last twelve quarters. The Lively Grove coal
10 mine has reported noncompliance with their
11 water discharge NPDS permit in one out of
12 the last twelve quarters.

13 In 2018 groundwater pollution was
14 found around the coal ash landfill, cobalt
15 was at concentrations nearly 22 times the
16 health threshold, and lead was at
17 concentrations as high as 15 times the
18 health threshold. A well on the southern
19 edge of the landfill had the highest
20 concentration of the coal ash indicator
21 boron, which tells us that this
22 contamination is likely caused by coal ash.

23 Despite this pollution, the
24 facility is no longer monitoring for the

1 most dangerous pollutants in coal ash. They
2 store their coal ash in a landfill, so it's
3 not subject to the 2019 Coal Ash Pollution
4 Prevention Act, which addresses coal ash in
5 coal ash ponds. So we think they found a --
6 kind of a regulatory loophole through the
7 Federal 2015 CCR law to not monitor for
8 these coal ash contaminants anymore.

9 And as of 2024 Prairie State
10 reports the landfill contains 23 million
11 cubic yards of coal ash. This volume of
12 coal ash is staggering. Prairie State makes
13 more coal ash per year than some power
14 plants make in their entire lifetime. And
15 while some of that coal ash is reused for
16 beneficial reuses, over 1 million cubic
17 yards of coal ash and other coal waste are
18 stored in the landfill each year.

19 I understand that these surface
20 water, groundwater, and coal ash issues are
21 not relevant to the topic of the air permit,
22 but there is a pattern here, and I urge the
23 agency to do what it can to work with both
24 the applicant and the U.S. EPA to assure

1 compliance and up-to-date permits with the
2 best available control technologies to
3 address the surface water, groundwater
4 pollution, along with the air pollution and
5 coal ash.

6 In closing, the Illinois EPA must
7 issue a strong final operating permit in a
8 timely manner with the strongest protections
9 for Illinois communities. Thank you.

10 MR. GUY: Thank you, Amanda, for your
11 comments.

12 Next is Aline Russell, A-L-I-N-E,
13 R-U-S-S-E-L-L, followed by Kevin, last name
14 L-E-I-F-E-R, followed by Dave Meyer.

15 MS. RUSSELL: Thank you for this
16 opportunity. I appreciate your being here
17 and listening to us.

18 I live in Alton. I'm
19 representing -- I'm a volunteer with
20 Sierra Club, and I'm also a Presbyterian
21 minister serving in Hardin, Illinois.

22 My concerns are for this area but
23 also for the whole state. As a pastor and a
24 Christian, I was concerned for the air

1 pollution in the world, so it's important to
2 do what we can here.

3 I'm asking that the Illinois
4 Environmental Protection Agency ensure that
5 your most stringent regulations are going
6 into effect with your Prairie State
7 Generating Plant Station draft permit for
8 this hugely polluting coal plant. I also
9 ask that the complete cost of coal plants
10 could somehow be determined exactly,
11 including all the health effects and
12 recovery efforts and paid for by
13 coal-powered plants themselves. I would
14 like to see the actual full cost of air
15 pollution on people and on the environment
16 from Prairie State included in
17 considerations for these permit approvals.

18 I guess I find myself shocked that
19 Prairie State has been operating without an
20 operating permit, which I assumed would be
21 required before beginning operations. The
22 Clean Air Task Force website says that
23 Prairie State air pollution causes
24 approximately 76 deaths, 33 heart attacks,

1 41 acute bronchitis episodes, 785 asthma
2 attacks, and over 3,000 work loss days each
3 year. So that's quite a cost.

4 As many of you know, we have
5 already passed the tipping point in terms of
6 CO2, rising ocean temperatures, rising air
7 temperatures around the world, melting
8 glaciers and ice. The consequences the
9 world is already facing from climate change
10 demands that every agency possible, that we
11 urgently do everything we can to reduce the
12 man-made causes. That's all we can do.

13 Thank you very much for listening.

14 MR. GUY: Thank you for your comments,
15 Aline.

16 Kevin, followed by Dave Meyer,
17 M-E-Y-E-R.

18 MR. LIEFER: Good evening. Thank you
19 for affording me the opportunity to speak to
20 you tonight on behalf of Prairie State.

21 My name is Kevin Liefer. My wife
22 and I live in rural Red Bud. We can see
23 both Prairie State and the Baldwin power
24 plant from our home. We own and operate a

1 grain farm with our three sons and their
2 families. We have a grandson now involved,
3 and he will be the fifth generation.

4 Our family had been members of
5 Egyptian Electric Cooperative for 62 years.
6 We all live on the Egyptian mines and are
7 proud co-op members. I've had the privilege
8 of serving on the Egyptian board and am
9 currently chairman of that board. Egyptian
10 is one of seven member owners of
11 Southern Illinois Park Cooperative. SIPC is
12 Egyptian's wholesale power provider, and I
13 represent Egyptian on that board as well.
14 The SIPC is one of nine not-for-profit
15 owners of the Prairie State Energy Campus.
16 Egyptian electric provides power to more
17 than 15,000 homes and businesses in all or
18 parts of ten counties in Southern Illinois.

19 What makes cooperatives unique from
20 investor-owned utilities is that co-ops,
21 like ours, are wholly owned by the people it
22 serves. That ownership comes with
23 responsibility and pride. Co-ops like ours
24 have done what many other utilities would

1 not. We have invested directly in our own
2 generation for the long-term benefit of
3 rural communities. Prairie State has
4 resulted that forward-thinking commitment to
5 rural reliability and affordability.

6 For years critics have dismissed
7 Prairie State with incomplete narratives,
8 including the claim that it is the dirtiest
9 plant in the state. That assertion ignores
10 one basic fact. Prairie State generates
11 more than twice the electricity of any other
12 coal plant in Illinois. Output matters.

13 If you look at the emission
14 performance on a per-megawatt or
15 per-kilowatt basis, Prairie State is the
16 most efficient plant in the state, hands
17 down. That performance didn't happen by
18 accident. More than 1 billion was invested
19 in state-of-the-art emissions controls. The
20 result is a facility that performs better
21 than every other plant in Illinois. Those
22 who criticize the plant rarely acknowledge
23 these facts or the scale of what Prairie
24 State delivers, not just from member

1 consumers like my family, but for
2 communities in our region.

3 At a time when energy supplies
4 nationwide are becoming increasingly
5 strained and during challenging situations
6 when people need power the most, we cannot
7 afford to sideline reliable generation.
8 Just take a look at which energy sources
9 kept powering our grid during recent winter
10 storm Vern. It was base-load power
11 generation plants, including Prairie State,
12 that saved the day.

13 We need the best performing assets
14 if we are to stay the course. Prairie State
15 continues to be one of the strongest and
16 most reliable tools we have to keep the
17 lights on for my family, for our member
18 owners, and for the future of reliable
19 energy in Southern Illinois. I stand firm
20 in support of Prairie State and its
21 continued operation. Thank you.

22 MR. GUY: Thank you, Kevin.

23 Next is Dave Meyer, followed by
24 Dale, last name W-O-J-T-K-O-W-S-K-I.

1 MR. MEYER: Okay. First of all, I'd
2 like to thank you for holding the hearing
3 this evening. My name is David Meyer. I
4 serve as the Washington County Board
5 Chairman. I also serve as a Chairman of the
6 State of Illinois on County Officials, and
7 our county here has 15 county board members
8 that represents our county. So I want to
9 make a few comments this evening about what
10 actually happened here in Washington County.

11 All said and done, when it first
12 came and I got a phone call, I didn't really
13 know what I was getting into. But I have
14 been here since day one, when they came to
15 Washington County, and our board has been
16 very strong in support of Prairie State and
17 their accomplishments on what they have
18 done. Yes, we've had interesting meetings.
19 Our official duty is to deal with taxes, as
20 comments have been made this evening. I can
21 tell you that in our county we've had
22 \$70 million worth of tax revenue, anything
23 from a total remodeling of our courthouse,
24 judicial building, we just put up a brand

1 new Amos facility and also in the community
2 of -- this is in Nashville. The other
3 community in Oakville has had a brand new
4 school system put in place that basically
5 was wore out, what they had. So there is a
6 lot of benefits.

7 Also the fact over the period of
8 time the economic impact on the employees
9 that come from Washington County, we really
10 have to thank Prairie State for that. And
11 they've been very workable. I mentioned
12 that earlier. Things don't happen on a
13 project like this without working together.
14 So I wanted to mention a few of those items.

15 Another thing is pertaining to if
16 there's needs with organizations, they have
17 probably, I was told, over \$600,000 worth of
18 different improvements, but that's in a
19 several-county area here.

20 So, at this point, I would like to
21 thank you for allowing me to speak, and
22 hopefully it will be here for a long time.
23 Thank you.

24 MR. GUY: Thank you, Dave.

1 Next is Dale, followed by Robert
2 Platt, P-L-A-T-T.

3 MR. WOJTKOWSKI: Good evening. My name
4 is Dale Wojtkowski, and I am a resident of
5 Washington County, and I'm here tonight
6 because of my concern for the health and
7 welfare of my neighbors, my family, and
8 myself.

9 I am not a scientist, so I will not
10 get into the details of the chemistry of the
11 emissions of this plant. I, like many
12 others, spend significant amounts of time
13 outdoors in this area. Some of the
14 residents spend their days farming and doing
15 other activities that earn their livelihood,
16 that require them to be outdoors. We also
17 enjoy many outdoor activities, such as
18 hunting, fishing, gardening, and biking.

19 I know many people with respiratory
20 issues in the area, and personally I have
21 asthma, and we would like to be assured that
22 the air permit for this facility protects us
23 in the best way possible. The micron-sized
24 particles that are currently being emitted

1 are especially harmful to people that have
2 COPD, and I have known some that have passed
3 away from this disease.

4 All I am asking is that you don't
5 sacrifice our health in lieu of profits of
6 the Prairie State organization. I do hold a
7 lack of trust that Prairie State Generating
8 Company will do what is best -- what is in
9 the best interest of the public, as I have
10 been following the project from its
11 beginning.

12 A special use permit was needed at
13 the start of the project to satisfy the
14 zoning requirements. During the public
15 hearing for this permit, I asked the
16 question if coal ash would be stored on
17 site. One of the company's officers made a
18 public sworn statement that no coal ash
19 would be stored in Washington County. And
20 we can see -- we can all see how that went.

21 Thank you very much for your time.

22 MR. GUY: Thank you, Dan.

23 Robert Platt, followed by Tracy
24 Fox, T-R-A-C-Y, F-O-X, Tracy Fox.

1 MR. PLATT: Good evening. My name is
2 Dr. Robert Platt. I'm from Chester,
3 Illinois, which is about 30 miles south of
4 here. We're an old river town, and for
5 those that live away from here, it's the
6 home of Popeye. Elzie Segar was the
7 cartoonist that invented Popeye, and so
8 that's our claim to fame.

9 Anyway, as I said, I'm retired.
10 I'm here to bring attention to the mercury
11 that this power plant emits. In dentistry
12 we have to capture all our solids, and
13 that's because the silver fillings
14 historically have had mercury in them, and
15 that's been controversial for several
16 decades. At any rate, we have to capture
17 those solids, and then we send them to a
18 hazardous landfill.

19 In an office, a single practitioner
20 office like mine was, in a year's time that
21 would probably result in a couple of grams
22 by weight of mercury, if that much. I have
23 not been able to find out how much mercury,
24 by weight, Prairie State generates, but

1 nationwide, according to one source that I
2 found, the coal-fired plants emit 40 to
3 52 tons of mercury per year.

4 Mercury, as you might know, is a
5 heavy metal, and it's toxic, and it's
6 responsible for several illnesses. So my
7 hope is that the mercury emissions are
8 seriously considered in the operating permit
9 process for Prairie State. Thank you.

10 MR. GUY: Thank you, Robert.

11 Tracy Fox.

12 MS. FOX: Hi. I also want to thank the
13 EPA for being here tonight to take testimony
14 from citizens interested in this very
15 important issue. This permit was issued.
16 It is 14 years late. And there's a couple
17 of things related to that date that
18 especially bother me.

19 This is a really serious source of
20 emissions for our state. It's your biggest
21 greenhouse gas emitter. They have exceeded
22 mercury and other limits a number of times.
23 There are high levels of criteria
24 pollutants, and that's even relative to the

1 plant's output, and it contributes to
2 regional haze.

3 I am very concerned about why a
4 plant with 12 million tons of carbon
5 dioxide, thousands of tons of ozone forming
6 SO₂ and NO_x, and 25 tons of hazardous air
7 pollution is still being held to standards
8 that were developed in 2005.

9 You know, when I think about the
10 regional haze and I see names like MANGO and
11 Hercules Glade in the Missouri Ozarks, I see
12 the Upper Buffalo down in Arkansas, and I
13 see the Sipsev Wilderness all the way
14 down -- all the way in Northern Alabama, all
15 places I have taken my canoe and enjoyed, I
16 have to question whether or not the impacts
17 of this are really maybe more significant
18 than EPA is giving credence to in this
19 permit.

20 I have four specific asks. I have
21 not had a lot of time to review the permit,
22 and it may be that there will be more
23 details there than I was able to uncover in
24 the past few days.

1 First of all, please set limits
2 that reflect the actual science. I applaud
3 you for forcing the PM10 stringency that was
4 recommended in 2005, but I would note that
5 how does that compare to the tightened
6 standards that happened in 2024? How does
7 that compare to the three other adjustments
8 that were made to PM standards in the past
9 21 years? A lot of science has come into
10 play since that 2005 permit and its
11 recommendation that more stringent limits up
12 to 50 percent lower could be set. I don't
13 think that's compelling, except as a sound
14 bite.

15 In terms of the science, I'm not
16 sure that those limits have kept pace, and I
17 would expect that, since this is being
18 issued as a new permit, it would, in fact,
19 reflect all of the science for the past
20 21 years, not just what state-of-the-art was
21 in 2005. And I have not had time to
22 research it, but I would hope that
23 similarly, as I know that SO2 limits have
24 been adjusted, I know that some of the other

1 criteria pollutants new best avail -- or not
2 criteria, hazardous air pollutants, new best
3 available technologies have been suggested.
4 I would hope that the EPA is carefully
5 reviewing all of those against the current
6 standards, and I also hope that the Illinois
7 EPA would do that in the spirit in which
8 this state is approaching the state of the
9 affairs in Washington, that we are looking
10 at a backstop of when, for example, the CEJA
11 legislation went into effect so that we are
12 looking at EPA standards at the time that
13 this Prairie State issue came about and at
14 the time that the judge's orders came down
15 saying that Illinois EPA needed to jump on
16 and issue this permit.

17 Secondly, I would ask you to look
18 at the regional haze, because I believe
19 that's sort of a -- it's just sort of an
20 example of how out of control this is. And,
21 I mean, we have similar situations in Peoria
22 where you might remember our Edwards coal
23 plant that, you know, was finally issued a
24 permit and, you know, nothing was enforced

1 for many, many years, and so we had to go to
2 federal court to get an order in order to
3 find violations, you know, and that was
4 using something called opacity. There is a
5 lot of arcane data there, but I think if you
6 can address the big visible problems, you're
7 going to pick up a lot of the minor problems
8 along the way.

9 And, thirdly, that brings me to
10 enforcement. Please ensure that there are
11 strong enforcement standards. When I looked
12 through the permit, I couldn't readily find
13 any information about what sorts of changes
14 were being asked to, in fact, address the
15 mercury exceedances that triggered the whole
16 issuance of this 21-year-old permit. And so
17 I think it would be good for citizens and,
18 you know, the everyday people, as well as
19 the folks that work there and the folks from
20 these local communities, to understand how
21 we're going to move forward and do better,
22 because I think that enforcement has always
23 been the weakest link. It should never come
24 to a situation where citizen enforcement is

1 what's driving change and stopping pollution
2 in communities. You all should always be
3 out ahead of us on that. And so I would
4 challenge you to do better.

5 And, finally, I would hope that you
6 would reflect the state's long-term
7 direction. We know that the state of
8 Illinois is on a path towards becoming
9 coal-free, to say it in one way, and I think
10 that we need to have more than just a single
11 plan, you know, of just say, hey, meet these
12 limits, meet these limits.

13 We need to be thinking outside of
14 the box. For example, why, in any of the
15 past analysis, have we not examined changing
16 the type of coal that's run through this
17 plant? We know Illinois coal produces a lot
18 more pollutants than coal from out west, but
19 I didn't see that entertained.

20 Now, as an environmentalist I'm
21 probably not going to support that, but
22 nonetheless, you should be looking for ways
23 that we can reduce these numbers and
24 examining all possible options short of

1 closing the plant. Similarly, I don't see
2 any kind of stair-step threshold of how they
3 are to reduce emissions. They're just,
4 boom, supposed to be, you know, at zero by
5 2045.

6 And I especially worry about this
7 in light of recent developments. I know
8 that the Baldwin plant was slated to close
9 December 31st, and it did not. Instead,
10 it's being continued to run due to
11 reliability concerns. And, you know, if you
12 look at the federal handling of the coal ash
13 stuff, you can already see that Baldwin,
14 Newton, and Kincaid plants have been granted
15 a variance on their compliance with coal ash
16 cleanup.

17 We don't know what the future
18 holds, so I don't think that pointing at
19 deadlines and expecting solutions to
20 materialize those is a good path to be on,
21 especially for a plant as large and
22 significant as the Prairie State Generating
23 Campus. I think it's important for EPA to
24 create a permit that guides the plant

1 towards, in fact, ratcheting down emissions
2 every step of the way that's in the spirit
3 of the Clean Energy Jobs Act, that is in
4 spirit of the direction of the state of
5 Illinois, and it should be what you, as
6 environmental regulators, are trying to help
7 all major industrials do across the state on
8 every permit that you touch.

9 I know you're up to the work, so
10 good luck, and thank you.

11 MR. GUY: Thank you, Tracy.

12 Next we have Randa Watts,
13 W-A-T-T-S, followed by John Baker.

14 MS. WATTS: Hello. My name is Randa
15 Watts, that's spelled R-A-N-D-A, W-A-T-T-S,
16 and I'm the Clean Water Organizer with
17 Prairie Rivers Network. I would like to
18 thank you for the chance to speak today, and
19 I'll try to keep my comments short.

20 As others have quoted tonight,
21 according to a report by the Sierra Club,
22 Prairie State is likely responsible for
23 76 deaths. The air pollution release from
24 this plant also contributes to climate

1 change, respiratory diseases, and cancers.

2 I would like to ask that you hold
3 Prairie State to the highest environmental
4 standard to reduce future health and
5 environmental impacts. Thank you.

6 MR. GUY: Thank you.

7 John Baker, followed by Kevin
8 Timmerman.

9 MR. BAKER: Hello. Good evening. My
10 name is John Baker, J-O-H-N, B-A-K-E-R. I
11 am a long-time Marissa resident, as well as
12 a trustee on the board here in Marissa.

13 This town does rely heavily on the
14 economic impact of Prairie State, and we're
15 grateful for that. So I have attended this
16 public meeting in favor for the renewal of
17 the Title V operating permit for
18 Prairie State and also for reasonableness in
19 the decision on the CAAPP permit and the
20 sulfur dioxide permit as well.

21 So as a former employee of
22 Prairie State, recently retired, I know that
23 after being part of the engineering team
24 there Prairie State management, at all

1 levels, as well as technicians and
2 operational staff share a deep pride in
3 operating the plant safely and efficiently
4 in an effort to minimize gas and all
5 particulate emissions. The engineering team
6 that I was a part of there was, and remains,
7 diligent in its efforts to incorporate
8 design strategies, including modern
9 monitoring technologies. Engineering was,
10 and remains, diligent in performing
11 inspections on equipment during outages to
12 ensure pollution control equipment is
13 operating in a most efficient manner.
14 Prairie State maintenance teams shared in
15 that diligence in effecting repairs as
16 needed on such equipment as the
17 electrostatic precipitators and the
18 scrubbers to keep the plant operating again
19 in the cleanest possible manner. The
20 controls group was responsible for boiler
21 tuning issues and were very sensitive in
22 maintaining the highest practical levels of
23 combustion efficiency. And if you're not
24 aware, and I think you are, boiler

1 efficiency and minimal emissions go hand in
2 hand.

3 As a community leader, I know
4 Prairie State is a caring and conscientious
5 member of the Marissa and surrounding
6 community, and I thank you for this
7 opportunity to speak.

8 MR. GUY: Thanks, John. Kevin
9 Tinnerman. Kevin is not here?

10 Jeff Strieker, followed by Cindy
11 Shepherd.

12 MR. STRIEKER: Good evening, everyone.
13 My name is Jeff Strieker, J-E-F-F, Strieker,
14 S-T-R-I-E-K-E-R. I am the friendly
15 neighborhood superintendent of schools here
16 in Marissa. And, Jeff, I want to thank you
17 for the initial ground rule of not booing
18 the person at the podium tonight. Thank
19 you.

20 I've been superintendent since July
21 of 2019. On January 3rd of 2020 I was
22 afforded the awesome opportunity to join a
23 group of staff members of the school
24 district to experience a tour of the

1 Prairie State facility. We spent the
2 morning below ground and the afternoon at
3 the power plant above ground. What an
4 amazing experience for a man who feels he
5 has come full circle growing up in the small
6 town of Albers and just a couple miles north
7 of Monterey Coal Mine No. 2. I had driven
8 past that on my bike so many times as a
9 child, wondering what it was like to be
10 inside, and the good folks at Prairie State
11 allowed me to experience that, and I've
12 always appreciated it.

13 Over the past six and a half years,
14 Prairie State has been involved in a number
15 of initiatives that have benefited our
16 students, staff, and community. They
17 provided classroom grants to teachers to
18 fund unique projects that the district might
19 not ordinarily be able to afford and fund.
20 Each December Prairie State and its
21 employees donate gifts of clothing, toys to
22 students in need from our elementary school.
23 This past Christmas over 28 students
24 benefited from this program, and over the

1 past 18 or so years nearly 3,000 students
2 have benefited from the generosity of
3 Prairie State and its employees.

4 Every February Prairie State
5 employees sponsor a food drive to support
6 our local food pantries. Mr. Baker, who was
7 just up here, his wife, Pam, runs the
8 food -- the Marissa food pantry, and I'm
9 certain if she were here she would agree
10 with me that the efforts of Prairie State
11 and their employees certainly help out our
12 students, their families, and the entire
13 community.

14 We, here, in Marissa, have an
15 alternative school setting called
16 Project Up. It's for students that don't
17 navigate the hallways with so many students
18 around. They are in a smaller classroom
19 school setting. And at this time of the
20 year, their teacher, on an every-other-week
21 basis, takes their students out to Prairie
22 State, where they experience mentorship from
23 employees of Prairie State. This provides
24 some awesome opportunities for them to learn

1 valuable lessons about the future life of
2 employment, so much so that currently we
3 have a former student of Project Up that is
4 a full-time employee out at Prairie State.

5 Ultimately, though, Prairie State
6 employs a good number of parents of our
7 students. Their business provides
8 opportunities for our graduates to one day
9 work alongside their parents or possibly
10 even replace them in jobs out there, and
11 that's very important.

12 For our school district it's
13 important to have a good neighbor like
14 Prairie State to provide the support it does
15 for our community.

16 Again, I thank you for the
17 opportunity to share, and a special thank
18 you to all of the employees that are here
19 tonight from Prairie State who directly or
20 indirectly have a positive impact on Marissa
21 School District No. 40. Thank you.

22 MR. GUY: Thanks, Jeff.

23 Cindy Shepherd, S-H-E-P-H-E-R-D.

24 MS. SHEPHERD: Great. Thank you. My

1 name is Cindy Shepherd. I've been a
2 resident of Illinois for 35 years now. This
3 is my place. And I'm the Energy Builder
4 Director for a nonprofit called Faith in
5 Place. I work with people of faith, like
6 myself, whose spiritual practice includes
7 caring for our common home and loving our
8 neighbors with whom we share the earth, the
9 water, and the sky.

10 My job also includes advocating for
11 just systems that protect homes and
12 families, and I am pleased and thankful to
13 be able to speak with you tonight to plead
14 with the EPA to remedy a 14-year oversight
15 that has allowed Prairie State to operate
16 without a Clean Air Operating Permit, which
17 every other coal-burning facility in the
18 state has had to have. It's not just. I
19 mean just, it's not fair that the largest
20 coal plant in the state measured by CO2
21 emissions, measured by methane gas, measured
22 by sulfur dioxide and NOx has dodged the
23 kind of accountability and oversight that
24 comes to every power plant that submits to

1 the virtue of a permit. I feel like this is
2 a situation where it's almost as if the
3 biggest kid on the playground wasn't having
4 to follow the same rules as everybody else.

5 If we could count on that big kid,
6 behemoth, to play without harming others out
7 of the goodness of their hearts, that would
8 be one thing. And I certainly think that we
9 have seen a lot of good hearts here with the
10 people of Prairie State Plant and Marissa.
11 There's not a bad intention in the crowd.
12 But they have received -- they have done
13 things that have harmed others.

14 And you have heard how the
15 National Park Service, for instance, is
16 concerned about the amount of haze that's
17 coming from this -- being emitted from this
18 power plant. And we might just dismiss, you
19 know, the National Park Service because we
20 know that they're kind of persnickety, but
21 when you find out that that same concern was
22 raised by Arkansas, I mean, kind of
23 embarrassing.

24 So I also want to mention the fact

1 that Prairie State management asked and
2 received special exceptions and extension of
3 a timeline for emission reduction targets in
4 the state legislation called the Clean
5 Energy Jobs Act. They have received special
6 treatment because they are so big and have a
7 complicated ownership structure. They
8 received special treatment for 14 years.

9 And I am not only a minister and an
10 advocate, but I'm also a mom, and I know
11 that it's very hard to impose rules on
12 somebody who is 14 years old that's never
13 had to follow them before. But now is the
14 time to do it, right? Let's not put it off
15 any longer. And perhaps they need to be
16 strict rules, not for punishment, not
17 because you don't think that they want to do
18 the right thing, but because at 14 they're
19 going to have to have some help learning how
20 to play well with others that are living in
21 this state and breathing this air.

22 Environmental protection agencies
23 in the states in our -- my beautiful home
24 state of Illinois are especially important

1 at this time, and I beg you to step up to
2 protect the citizens and the future that we
3 all hope our children share, no matter what
4 age they are. We want them to breathe well,
5 even when they're 14.

6 So please make sure that Prairie
7 State begins to operate under valid and
8 strict Clean Air Permits. No more
9 permitting delays or exceptions for this
10 Prairie State. Thank you.

11 MR. GUY: Thank you, Cindy.

12 Next is Kevin McKee, followed by
13 Josh Raterman. Kevin, K-E-V-I-N, M-C-K-E-E.

14 MR. MCKEE: Yes. Thank you very much.
15 Thanks for the opportunity to speak tonight.
16 My name is Kevin McKee, and I want to say,
17 before I plunge into my written comments
18 here, that none of us really doubt the value
19 that the plant brings to the local economy,
20 to provide jobs to the economy. We don't
21 doubt that it's the most efficient plant in
22 the state. We don't doubt that it's the
23 biggest plant in the state. We don't doubt
24 it's reliable. These are all facts. These

1 are true. We understand that. The reason
2 we are here tonight is to talk about
3 pollution and what can we do about it.

4 I'm a resident of Troy in Madison
5 County. I settled there in 2010, a couple
6 years before the plant opened here and began
7 operating. My wife and I moved from
8 Virginia. I was a federal employee
9 transferred to St. Louis. We were looking
10 for someplace to live locally. We did a lot
11 of due diligence trying to figure out where
12 was the best place. We looked at maps. We
13 studied geography. We looked for flood
14 risk. We looked at school districts,
15 because she was a teacher. We analyzed and
16 analyzed and analyzed.

17 One thing we didn't think about
18 was, oh, we're only a few miles from this
19 huge power plant, but we would have figured
20 that at least, well, they're being
21 monitored, they're being followed. They're
22 going to be held to account for any
23 pollutions.

24 My wife, it turns out, has had

1 asthma all her life, along with other
2 medical issues, and this would have been a
3 concern for us had we realized that they --
4 this plant was not being held to account for
5 pollution standards. We might have decided
6 to settle elsewhere, maybe not even in
7 Illinois, maybe even not moved to the area.

8 At any rate, we did it. That was
9 maybe our oversight, our fault for not
10 figuring that out at the time. As two
11 people who are environmentalists and science
12 majors, the realization later on that we
13 lived in this area with a heavily polluted
14 plant was deeply disappointing.

15 A couple years ago, out of
16 frustration with this situation, some
17 friends and I considered taking it upon
18 ourselves to do what we called the citizen
19 science air pollution monitoring. I bought
20 some equipment and started collecting data
21 around the area here, but I found that it
22 was really challenging for amateurs to do
23 this kind of thing. So I'm really glad
24 you're all here today and listening to our

1 concerns. I think this is something better
2 done by professionals than amateur citizens
3 taking matters into their own hands.

4 I look forward and I urge the
5 agency to hold the company fully
6 accountable, impose strict pollution limits,
7 and ensure ongoing transparent monitoring so
8 that residents can trust the air we breathe.

9 I did notice, in the paperwork,
10 that IEPA is holding the plant to a
11 stringent threshold for particulate matter,
12 10 microns. I think this is the right thing
13 to do. Nevertheless, based on my own
14 calculations, based on how much coal the
15 plant burns and knowledge about that
16 threshold, this means that the plant still
17 emits about one ton of PM10 per day every
18 day of the year. I mentioned this to my
19 wife. She said that sounds like a lot.
20 Maybe it is.

21 I have a couple questions about
22 this and I'll close. First, how will PM10
23 be measured? Is that based at the stack or
24 elsewhere? Is that in the environment

1 around the plant, in the communities? And
2 then is the plant also being monitored for
3 PM2.5 or smaller? These particles can be
4 even more harmful than PM10, as they can
5 pass through bodily tissue into organs.
6 What is the threshold for that? How is that
7 monitored, if at all?

8 Thank you for this opportunity.

9 MR. GUY: Thank you. Hold on one
10 second.

11 MS. CARTER: I think that we can answer
12 at least part of that question here today in
13 terms of how PM10 is measured or monitored
14 currently at Prairie State, so I'm going to
15 pass it over to Ryan just to answer that
16 question for you.

17 MR. HENDRICKSON: Prairie State conducts
18 testing, stack testing, for particulate
19 matter every 30 months or so. In addition
20 to their current testing, they also have a
21 CEMS, continuous emissions monitoring
22 system, installed on the stack that they can
23 measure continuously, and so they have that
24 on record as well.

1 MS. CARTER: And then the remainder of
2 those questions obviously we will be
3 answering and addressing in the
4 responsiveness summary, like every other
5 comment that we've had here today, but that
6 was one I thought we could answer for you
7 here. Thank you.

8 MR. GUY: Josh, go ahead.

9 MR. RATERMAN: Hello. My name is Josh
10 Raterman. I am the business manager for
11 Boilermakers Local 363. I'm proud to be
12 here today representing over 400 members of
13 Local 363 who work or have worked at Prairie
14 State Energy Campus here in Marissa.

15 Prairie State provides stable,
16 fulfilling, and good paying union jobs, not
17 only for our members but for boilermakers
18 across the country. Boilermakers represent
19 just a portion of the more than thousand
20 union craftspeople employed at the plant
21 every year. Working alongside pipefitters,
22 millwrights, ironworkers, electricians,
23 laborers, operators, and carpenters,
24 together these skilled union trades maintain

1 the power plant through a \$62 million annual
2 investment in Southern Illinois union
3 workforce. We are able to provide for our
4 families and contribute to our communities,
5 while at the same time providing an integral
6 service to our state by helping to ensure
7 the generation of reliable and affordable
8 base-load power.

9 Because of that work consumers
10 across Illinois do not have to worry if
11 there's enough power available when they
12 need to turn on their lights, run their
13 heaters, or use important equipment. In
14 fact, the power generated by Prairie State
15 is more important now than ever before.

16 A recent adequacy study by the
17 State of Illinois found that Illinois may
18 see an energy shortfall as soon as 2029, as
19 renewable sources struggle to keep up with
20 the surge in demand. Let that sink in.

21 We are just three years from
22 potentially not having the energy supply we
23 need to go about our daily lives. Frankly,
24 I find that disturbing. That's why this

1 permitting process is so important. The
2 decision regulators make could directly
3 impact Prairie State's ability to produce
4 the power Illinois needs.

5 It's important to note that
6 Prairie State already operates under
7 stringent environmental standards and is one
8 of the most efficient coal-fired power
9 plants in the country. It produces more
10 electricity per ton of coal than any other
11 plant in the state and is cleaner and more
12 efficient than power generated by most other
13 coal plants located across state lines.

14 Given the many warnings about
15 Illinois' pending energy crisis, I urge you
16 to adopt a sensible, balanced permit that
17 ensures Prairie State can continue to be a
18 part of Illinois' energy portfolio for a
19 long time to come. It's not just because
20 our jobs rely on Prairie State, it's because
21 all of Illinois relies on Prairie State.

22 Thank you.

23 MR. GUY: Thanks, Josh. And the last
24 name is spelled R-A-T-E-R-M-A-N.

1 Sally Burgess, B-U-R-G-E-S-S,
2 followed by Tim Place, P-L-A-C-E.

3 MS. BURGESS: Good evening. My name is
4 Sally Burgess, and I am the downstate
5 organizing manager for the Illinois chapter
6 of Sierra Club. I value the opportunity to
7 be here tonight. Thank you for this
8 opportunity to hear not only from colleagues
9 that I work with on a regular basis but from
10 the members of the community and the
11 employees at Prairie State.

12 I would like to address a critical
13 failure in environmental oversight that
14 directly impacts the health and safety of
15 every Illinois resident. The Prairie State
16 generating station is often described as a
17 climate giant of the midwest. While it is
18 technically one of the most efficient coal
19 plants in the country, its massive size
20 makes it a primary engine of climate change
21 within the state of Illinois. Prairie State
22 is the largest single source of greenhouse
23 gases in Illinois and consistently ranks
24 among the top ten largest industrial CO2

1 polluters in the United States. It releases
2 approximately 12.4 to 13 million tons of
3 carbon dioxide every year, roughly
4 equivalent to the annual emissions of
5 2.7 million passenger vehicles.

6 Cumulatively, since it began
7 operations in 2012, it has contributed over
8 150,000,000 tons of CO2 to the atmosphere,
9 directly fueling the warming trends that
10 lead to more frequent extreme weather events
11 and shifting agricultural zones in the
12 midwest. The company brands itself as
13 clean, which is technically true on a
14 per-unit basis, but misleading on a total
15 impact basis.

16 The efficiency argument is that
17 Prairie State uses super critical
18 technology, meaning it burns coal at higher
19 temperatures and pressures than older
20 plants. This allows it to produce about
21 15 percent less CO2 per megawatt hour than a
22 1970's era coal plant. The problem, though,
23 is its scale. Because this plant is so
24 large, at 1600 megawatts, and runs 24/7 as a

1 base-load provider, its total emissions far
2 outweigh the efficiency gains. It's
3 essentially a very efficient gas guzzler
4 that never stops driving.

5 For over a decade I've been
6 tracking the global CO2 levels as captured
7 by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric
8 Administration. Yesterday's reading was an
9 alarming 428.24 PPM, or parts per million.
10 We were warned in 1988 by climate scientist
11 James Hansen that we must not pass a global
12 CO level of 350 PPM. 350 is still, today,
13 considered a critical safety threshold. In
14 simple terms, 350 is like a fever of
15 99 degrees. You feel lousy, but your body
16 can still function. 428 is like a fever of
17 103. Organ systems start to fail, and the
18 risk of permanent damage, or tipping points,
19 become much more likely. And, yes, what we
20 do or don't do in Illinois is relevant.

21 Illinois has established ambitious
22 decarbonization goals to establish itself as
23 a national leader in fighting climate
24 change, and, yet, for over a decade the

1 Prairie State Generating Station has
2 operated as one of the largest sources of
3 air pollution in the United States.

4 To review, it is a facility that
5 burns millions of tons of coal annually,
6 releasing vast amounts of carbon dioxide,
7 sulfur dioxide, and nitrogen oxides into our
8 atmosphere, yet despite its massive
9 footprint this facility has operated for
10 more than 13 years without a final Clean Air
11 Act Title V Permit.

12 The Illinois EPA's primary mission
13 is to safeguard our environment. We're
14 counting on the IEPA to do its job and
15 require the most stringent air quality
16 controls available to protect the residents
17 of Illinois. Thank you.

18 MR. GUY: Thank you, Sally.

19 Our final registered speaker is
20 Tim Place. If anybody else wants to
21 register to speak, this would be the time to
22 do it.

23 MR. PLACE: Good evening. My name is
24 Tim Place, T-I-M, P-L-A-C-E, and when I

1 heard that this event was happening, I
2 really didn't understand it. But I thought
3 I would dig into what was happening, because
4 I am a neighbor to the power plant here.

5 I grew up in Southern Illinois. I
6 grew up a son of a coal miner. My
7 grandparents were coal miners, and I grew up
8 to leave the area with my undergraduate
9 degree in physics. So tonight I find it
10 interesting to come here and listen to the
11 different perspectives, because I appreciate
12 the science that's being discussed, having
13 been trained as a physicist, but I'm also a
14 CEO of a manufacturing company that
15 manufactures cable trays. So we're in the
16 electrical industry, and I understand the
17 electrical industry and how it's growing
18 nationwide. In fact, we are a global
19 company. I operate the manufacturing plant
20 in Sparta, Illinois, and we service the
21 growing industry of AI data center
22 construction. In fact, we are the only
23 supplier of cable trays to the Stargate
24 project in Abilene, Texas. So I get to see

1 the impacts of these large data centers
2 nationwide.

3 I was watching a report on the news
4 last night I found very interesting as well
5 that kind of fit with this. One of the
6 leaders at Com Ed, which is in Chicago, as
7 you know, was speaking in an interview and
8 explained that they provide 22 gigawatts
9 worth of power in their footprint baseline
10 load, and he said within the last year
11 they've had requests for new connections
12 that will take them through 2031, I believe
13 he said, it might have been '37, that over
14 30 gigawatts of power needed for new
15 construction AI data centers. That's
16 Chicago.

17 We're in Southern Illinois, and we
18 are sometimes forgotten. The people that
19 you see here, their manufacturing base
20 producing the power are important. They're
21 my neighbors, and I support them and hope
22 that their lives are considered in the
23 decisions that are made here.

24 I came from an area that dealt with

1 not the co-op that exists that Prairie State
2 is in but rather in Ameren, a customer. And
3 we've seen -- because I am a consumer from
4 Ameren in Sparta, I've seen very erratic
5 pricing spikes because of their obvious cost
6 differences. And the electric -- rural
7 electric co-op, they protect its members by
8 that by good planning for the generation, or
9 they hedge to protect their customers by
10 building and planning ahead and investing in
11 new base load. I appreciate that as a
12 neighbor.

13 So as a neighbor who lives down the
14 street, sees the power plant every day,
15 drives by it, and is in the industry that is
16 gobbling up power, I would recommend or ask
17 that it be considered what the future of
18 power is going to be needed, the future
19 needs are, and that the needs of the folks
20 in this region, in Southern Illinois, who
21 are sometimes forgotten from the bigger
22 cities, are taken into account when
23 decisions are made. Thank you. I
24 appreciate the time.

1 MR. GUY: Thank you, Tim.

2 Again, that was the last of the
3 registered speakers. Is there anybody else
4 here tonight that would like to provide oral
5 comments?

6 (No response.)

7 MR. GUY: Okay. That concludes the
8 public comment period for tonight's hearing.
9 Thank you all for your participation. If
10 you did not speak but wish to submit
11 comments, please do so in writing by
12 March 9th, 2026, which is the end of the
13 public comment period.

14 As previously stated, the Illinois
15 EPA will hold two additional virtual
16 hearings this Thursday at 2:00 and 6:00 p.m.
17 Documents related to these permitting
18 actions are available on the Illinois EPA
19 Bureau of Air Public Notices web page and at
20 the Illinois EPA offices in Springfield and
21 Collinsville, and at the Marissa Public
22 Library. Addresses, contact details, and
23 additional information can be found on the
24 public notice.

1 Thank you for your participation
2 and engagement in this process. Written
3 comments will be accepted until March 9th.
4 The Illinois EPA values your input as we
5 move toward a final decision.

6 The time is 7:44 p.m. Central Time,
7 and this public hearing is adjourned. Thank
8 you very much.

9 (Hearing concluded at
10 7:44 p.m. Central Time.)

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1 STATE OF ILLINOIS)
) SS:
2 COUNTY OF COOK)
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4

5 Sharon A. O'Donnell, Certified Shorthand
6 Reporter, state that I am a shorthand reporter
7 doing business in the State of Illinois; that I
8 reported in shorthand the proceedings of said
9 hearing, and that the foregoing is a true and
10 correct transcript of my shorthand notes so
11 taken as aforesaid and contains the proceedings
12 given at said hearing.

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Sharon O'Donnell
Sharon A. O'Donnell
CSR #084-002782



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