

A plea for maintaining nuclear plants considered at risk



A movement is gaining momentum to stop shutting down nuclear power plants that have little or no competitive advantage over natural gas-fired plants or have high maintenance costs. The reason: The less we rely on nuclear energy, the more carbon will be released to the atmosphere to make up the lost electricity now generated by nuclear energy, given the fact that neither solar or wind energy can even come close to making up the large amount of generating capacity that would be lost.

An impressive group of personalities, including Carol Browner, former EPA Administrator, several senators and others have formed a group called *Nuclear Matters*, which is lobbying for maintaining our nuclear generating capacity to help in limiting carbon emissions. This, to highlight the fact that last year owners shut down or planned to shutter five nuclear power plants representing 4 percent of U.S. nuclear capacity.

All of this is against a background of little nuclear energy having been added since the Three Mile Island incident some forty years ago and the uncertainty about what to do about disposing of nuclear waste.

One possible way to keep some of the nuclear plants in operation is for the EPA to consider a form of "carbon trading" involving coal-fired power plants that would be slated for shutdown if the agency moves ahead with plans to limit carbon emissions. This would allow operators of threatened coal-fired plants to invest money to keep older, high maintenance nuclear plants in operation in return for continuing to run some of their coal-fired plants. If this does not happen, both types of plants would cease operations with lost capacity made up via construction of new natural gas-fired plants.

Supporters of renewable energy should line up solidly behind the *Nuclear Matters* group, because an interim step to keep both existing types of plants in operation would be a good stopgap plan to look ahead to the time when wind and solar could arguably take up the slack.

Source: <http://chemengineeringposts.wordpress.com/2014/05/06/a-plea-for-maintaining-nuclear-plants-considered-at-risk/>