

Earth Business: Take a deeper Oklahoma breath

THE JOURNAL RECORD

Last week, we remembered the year 1992. More specifically, the fact that America is now enjoying air that was as clean as it was then. This is in large part thanks to the fact that many electric generating utilities across the country are leaning more on natural gas for electricity generation, replacing coal-fired generation. The emissions data released a few weeks ago that led scientists to this conclusion also provides a breakdown of plant-by-plant analysis across the country.

Armed with this data, I think it is important for us, to take a closer look at what is going on in Oklahoma. Coal-fired generation is, and has been for generations, a major part of the fuel portfolios utilities use to deliver electricity they are required by law to provide. Oklahoma is no exception. The data released measured pollution emitted so far this year as of Aug. 1. Looking at Oklahoma's coal-fired generating units, here's the report card.

Grand River Dam Authority, Mayes County

- Sulfur dioxide emissions: 7,210 tons
- Nitrous oxide emissions: 7,020 tons

Hugo, Choctaw County

- Sulfur dioxide emissions: 3,851 tons
- Nitrous oxide emissions: 1,127 tons

Muskogee, Muskogee County

- Sulfur dioxide emissions: 11,233 tons
- Nitrous oxide emissions: 4,793 tons

Northeastern, Rogers County

- Sulfur dioxide emissions: 6,655 tons
- Nitrous oxide emissions: 3,401 tons

Sooner, Noble County

- Sulfur dioxide emissions: 7,919 tons
- Nitrous oxide emissions: 9,436 tons

For those of you keeping score, that is 36,868 tons of sulfur dioxide and 25,777 tons of nitrous oxide. Sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides have harmful effects on air quality, air visibility, and the health of everyday people like you and me. It is no wonder the Environmental Protection Agency, under the Clean Air Act, is working to try and reduce the level of harmful emissions generated each year. That is why the 1992 news is welcome.

Let's be clear, though, the burning of natural gas does produce nitrogen oxides, but it does so in significantly less quantities. That's good news. Plus, sulfur dioxide and even mercury compounds from natural gas are negligible. This helps explain why natural gas generation has led to cleaner air.

As Oklahomans, we should take a deep breath. We are armed with two incredible resources to help clean our air. Natural gas of course is one, but wind is another. These two native Oklahoma resources together can reduce Oklahoma's environmental footprint significantly while also spurring economic development in incredible ways. As Oklahomans, we should be hopeful that as we carve our path forward in the future, we strategically position ourselves to use a cleaner burning fossil fuel, and renewable blowing resources together, to ensure that cleaner air, reminiscent of 1992 is here to stay. This means cleaner generation for the next generation of

Oklahomans.

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