

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**  
**BEFORE THE**  
**FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION**

Tennessee Gas Pipeline Company, LLC )

Docket No. CP22-493-000

**Comment of Southern Alliance for Clean Energy**

The Southern Alliance for Clean Energy (SACE) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Cumberland gas pipeline in docket CP22-493. We are concerned that FERC relied too heavily on the Environmental Impact Statement prepared by the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA EIS) to justify the proposed new combined cycle that is the only reason for the pipeline proposed in docket CP22-493. We are also concerned that FERC did not find the project a significant contributor to climate change.

**I. FERC DEIS Relies Too Heavily on TVA EIS**

In its DEIS, FERC relies heavily on the TVA EIS for the replacement of one of two Cumberland coal units (CUF) in Tennessee. However, the TVA EIS contains many flaws. For example, TVA changed the Purpose and Need for Action between its draft EIS and final EIS without publishing an interim draft EIS for public comment. The draft EIS stated that “The Proposed Action to Retire CUF and pursue an alternative power generation source would provide cost-effective replacement generation, consistent with the 2019 IRP and near-term future

TVA energy production goals.”<sup>1</sup> The final EIS states “The purpose of the Proposed Action is to retire and decommission the two coal-fired CUF units, one unit by 2026 and the other by 2028, and to provide replacement generation that can supply 1,450 MW of firm, dispatchable power by the time the first unit is retired in 2026.”<sup>2</sup> The addition of a specific online year, capacity, and the use of the term “firm, dispatchable,” appear to narrow the purpose in order to favor TVA’s Alternative A, the Cumberland gas combined cycle and only alternative that requires the Cumberland pipeline at question in this docket, because the cost differences between Alternative A and Alternative C, replacement with solar and storage, narrowed while the environmental impacts of Alternative A remain much higher than those of Alternative C.

It was our hope that FERC would see through this ruse and include TVA’s Alternative C as an alternative in its own environmental review. The Cumberland pipeline DEIS states that it is outside of FERC’s scope to “direct other companies or agencies to design or construct a project that would take the place of this proposed Project.” But FERC would not need to direct anyone to design an alternative project because TVA has already done that. In its DEIS and EIS, TVA’s three alternatives were deemed suitable to replace the retiring Cumberland coal plant. When FERC is evaluating the environmental impacts of the Cumberland pipeline, which is only required by TVA’s Alternative A, it is in scope for FERC to consider the emissions of alternatives to that combined cycle plant that were proposed by TVA itself.

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<sup>1</sup> TVA, Cumberland Fossil Plant Retirement, Draft Environmental Impact Statement, April 2022, available online at [https://tva-azr-eastus-cdn-ep-tvawcm-prd.azureedge.net/cdn-tvawcma/docs/default-source/environment/cuf-deis-report-only-20220421.pdf?sfvrsn=61161246\\_3](https://tva-azr-eastus-cdn-ep-tvawcm-prd.azureedge.net/cdn-tvawcma/docs/default-source/environment/cuf-deis-report-only-20220421.pdf?sfvrsn=61161246_3).

<sup>2</sup> TVA, Cumberland Fossil Plant Retirement, Final Environmental Impact Statement, December 2022, available online at [https://tva-azr-eastus-cdn-ep-tvawcm-prd.azureedge.net/cdn-tvawcma/docs/default-source/environment/cumberland-fossil-plant-retirement-final-eis4eeac6f0-b6bf-4843-9881-75d19ccf8ede.pdf?sfvrsn=d61f6b6f\\_7](https://tva-azr-eastus-cdn-ep-tvawcm-prd.azureedge.net/cdn-tvawcma/docs/default-source/environment/cumberland-fossil-plant-retirement-final-eis4eeac6f0-b6bf-4843-9881-75d19ccf8ede.pdf?sfvrsn=d61f6b6f_7).

In addition to our own concerns with TVA's final Cumberland EIS, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) filed a letter containing "substantial" concerns.<sup>3</sup> EPA's concerns include the recent volatility in natural gas markets and that "TVA's preferred alternative does not take into account these trends and the implications of continued fossil fuel investment for its ratepayers and the cost and public health toll of increasingly disruptive climate-driven weather extremes."<sup>4</sup> EPA outlines further concerns, including that TVA's EIS did not disclose how alternatives are vulnerable to outages during extreme weather, that TVA's EIS "may continue to underestimate the potential costs of the combined cycle gas plant and overstate the cost of solar and storage," and that TVA's use of data from the Energy Information Administration (EIA) is inconsistent with the findings of EIA itself.<sup>5</sup> Without recreating EPA's comment letter here, it is clear that the agency has serious concerns with the EIS TVA used to justify its decision to choose a gas combined cycle plant to replace Cumberland.

It should be noted that TVA published its final EIS in early December 2022, emphasizing the reliability and firmness of a gas combined cycle plant. Just a few weeks after publishing the final EIS TVA had to implement rolling blackouts in two separate periods over two days because of a shortage of generation provided by coal and gas power plants, including at least one newer combined cycle similar to the one proposed at Cumberland. TVA is still working on a review of what happened during Winter Storm Elliott in December 2022, and FERC is working with NERC on a broader review. Even though we are still waiting on the results from those reviews, this winter storm along with Uri and several others have made it clear that gas power plants are not the firm, reliable solution utility planners once thought them to be. As climate change makes

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<sup>3</sup> U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, TVA Cumberland FEIS Letter, available for download under the heading "Comment Letter(s)" here:

<https://cdxapps.epa.gov/cdx-enepa-II/public/action/eis/details?eisId=385821>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

these winter storms more frequent and more severe in the region, it could be that TVA changes its mind about the proposed Cumberland combined cycle being the most reliable alternative.

Since TVA's EIS is flawed, FERC should redo its DEIS to rely less on TVA's EIS, including comparing overall project emissions to those of Alternative C from TVA's EIS.

## II. Project is a Significant Contributor to Climate Change

TVA has already decided to shut down its coal fleet by 2035, therefore the emissions from the Cumberland gas combined cycle and Cumberland gas pipeline should not be evaluated net of emission reductions from the retirement of one or both of the coal units at Cumberland. At its May 2021 meeting, TVA's primary regulator the TVA Board of Directors approved TVA's Strategic Intent and Guiding Principles.<sup>6</sup> That document includes a plan to retire all of TVA's coal units by 2035.

**Figure 1. Slide from TVA Board Meeting in May 2021 Describing Part of TVA's Strategic Intent and Guiding Principles**

### Coal Fleet Retirement

Established planning assumptions related to the retirement of all remaining coal by 2035

Orderly workforce transition  
Economic development in impacted communities  
Planning for resources needed to fill the energy void that will be created

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**TVA** TENNESSEE  
VALLEY  
AUTHORITY

Source: [\*TVA Board Meeting Presentation, May 2021\*](#)

<sup>6</sup> TVA Strategic Intent and Guiding Principles, May 2021, available online at [https://tva-azr-eastus-cdn-ep-tvawcm-prd.azureedge.net/cdn-tvawcma/docs/default-source/about-tva/board-of-directors/may-6-2021/strategic-plan-documentc67079e2-d479-4f3d-a13b-1fa6fd714cde.pdf?sfvrsn=bc7bb2e8\\_7](https://tva-azr-eastus-cdn-ep-tvawcm-prd.azureedge.net/cdn-tvawcma/docs/default-source/about-tva/board-of-directors/may-6-2021/strategic-plan-documentc67079e2-d479-4f3d-a13b-1fa6fd714cde.pdf?sfvrsn=bc7bb2e8_7).

Therefore it is inaccurate to use the net change in emissions that assumes continued operation of the CEF units as the DEIS does in Table 4.10-5 on page 4-99, since TVA's own Board of Directors has already approved TVA's plan to retire the CUF units by 2035. The emissions for consideration when determining whether this project significantly contributes to climate change should only be the gross lifecycle emissions from the pipeline and the continued operation of the new gas-fired combined cycle at the Cumberland site. If cumulative impacts are to be considered, it would also be prudent to evaluate the potential impacts of additional emissions should TVA use this same pipeline to supply a second gas-fired combined cycle plant at the Cumberland site since TVA's current proposal only includes the replacement of one of the CUF units at this time. TVA's final Cumberland EIS states that it evaluates "the Proposed Action of retiring both CUF units and the addition of at least 1,450 MW of firm, dispatchable generation to replace the generation capacity lost from retirement of one of the CUF units," and that "Planning for the replacement generation for the second retired CUF unit would be deferred."<sup>7</sup>

With just the one gas combined cycle plant, annual emissions are estimated at 5.6 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e per year according to Table 4.10-5 on page 4-99 of the DEIS. Therefore if TVA plans another gas combined cycle at the Cumberland site to replace the second CUF coal unit, annual emissions just from the combined cycle units could be approximately 11.2 million tons CO<sub>2</sub>e annually. The emissions from the proposed gas combined cycle and gas pipeline, and particularly if this pipeline opens up additional gas developments at the Cumberland site, put this project squarely in the "significant" category.

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<sup>7</sup> TVA Cumberland EIS.

### **III. SACE Recommendations**

SACE recommends that FERC redo its DEIS to rely less on TVA's EIS, including comparing overall project emissions to those of Alternative C from TVA's EIS, and find the overall project emissions are a significant contributor to climate change.