

# The “Mirant Plant” is now owned by GenOn. Join us to turn it *off*.

How should we be using a piece of beautiful waterfront property in Alexandria, surrounded by apartments and office buildings, hugged by the Mount Vernon bike trail, in view of our nation’s capital?

Right now, just such a space is being used to keep a 514 megawatt coal-fired power plant burning on standby for the regional power grid. Meanwhile, the plant is making us sick, spilling oil into the Potomac River, polluting right here in Virginia, and also blowing pollution onto our neighbors in Maryland and DC. The plant burns trainloads of coal from mountaintop removal mining in Appalachia, and the plant’s toxic coal ash waste has been dumped at sites in Maryland and Virginia, where it threatens communities’ drinking water.



What used to be known as the “Mirant Potomac River Generating Station” is now owned by GenOn, a corporate polluter based in Texas.

**The GenOn plant sends its profits and its power far away, while dumping its pollution and health costs right here – on us.** All of this for a plant that only operates at a fraction of its capacity, and isn’t even necessary to keep our lights on.

Local citizens of the City of Alexandria have fought the plant for nearly a decade, and have forced GenOn to set aside \$34 million in an effort to contain some of the plant’s pollution. While we applaud this initial effort, a growing group of concerned citizens believe that GenOn should not continue to invest in a plant that nobody wants here.

**We’re demanding that GenOn use that same money to retire the plant – permanently.**

Coal is a 19<sup>th</sup> Century energy source, and it’s time to move on. Around the country, communities are turning away from dirty coal power and embracing energy efficiency and renewable energy sources. No new coal plants have begun construction anywhere in the US in the last two years, and fully 150 proposed coal plants have been cancelled since 2001.

It’s time for us who live near the GenOn plant to lead the way towards a clean energy future and to imagine better, higher uses for our beautiful waterfront. We are calling on GenOn to set a retirement schedule for the coal plant this year.

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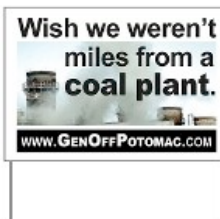
## You can help turn GenOn *off*.

Learn more on the other side of this sheet, and join our list: [www.GenOffPotomac.com](http://www.GenOffPotomac.com)

Take the first step by signing our letter telling Edward Muller, GenOn’s CEO, that it’s time to take this polluter out of our community at [GenOffPotomac.com](http://GenOffPotomac.com), or mail your own to **GenOn Headquarters, 1000 Main St, Houston, TEXAS 77002.**



*Edward Muller*



Order a lawn sign to let your neighbors know that you’d rather not be living so close to a coal-fired power plant: [www.cafepress.com/GenOffPotomac](http://www.cafepress.com/GenOffPotomac)

## [www.GenOffPotomac.com](http://www.GenOffPotomac.com)

# Why it's time to turn GenOn off.

## The GenOn coal plant is making us sick.

- Nearly 140,000 people live within three miles of the plant and its air and water pollution.<sup>1</sup>
- Our metro area is fifth in the nation for deaths from pollution from coal-fired power plants,<sup>2</sup> and the GenOn plant alone causes 37 deaths a year. Pollution from the GenOn coal plant is responsible for 60 heart attacks, 610 asthma attacks, 28 hospitalizations, 23 cases of chronic bronchitis annually,<sup>3</sup> that amount to healthcare costs of over \$287 million a year.<sup>4</sup>

## The GenOn coal plant is polluting our air and water.

- The plant has been cited for air quality violations by the Virginia Department of Environment three times in the last three years.<sup>5</sup>
- The plant's response to air quality violations, merged smokestacks, has not eliminated the plant's pollution. The plant continues to affect the nearby Alexandria community, and to blow pollution into neighboring Maryland and DC.<sup>6</sup>
- Spills at the plant site have dumped hundreds of gallons of oil into the Potomac River on two occasions within the last five months.<sup>7</sup>
- The plant produces 145 pounds of mercury every year that pollutes the surrounding air and water.<sup>8</sup> Mercury is a potent neurotoxin harmful to children at even very low doses.<sup>9</sup> Emissions from coal plants expose people to airborne mercury, and the EPA has said that of the air pollutants from the utility industry, mercury poses the greatest concern to public health.<sup>10</sup>
- Mercury emitted into the air by coal-fired power plants also ends up in water bodies, where it assumes a highly toxic form known as Methylmercury, which is ingested by fish.<sup>11</sup> Alexandrians have been seen fishing in waters around the plant. Eating fish contaminated with mercury exposes people to Methylmercury poisoning, which impairs cognitive health.<sup>12</sup>
- In the latest draft permit for the plant, EPA is proposing to allow the plant to discharge to the Potomac up to 9.2 pounds per day of bis (2ethylhexyl) phthalate — a chemical that EPA has concluded is a probable human carcinogen, and which recent research demonstrates may potentially have adverse effects on the development of the reproductive tract, especially in males, including reduced penis size and the incomplete descent of testes.<sup>13</sup>

## The GenOn coal plant is driving destruction of Appalachia's mountains and streams.

- Between 2006 and 2010, the plant purchased coal from mountaintop removal and underground mines in West Virginia, Kentucky, and Virginia, including Power Mountain Coal Company's processing facility, which sits atop one of the largest mountain top removal mining sites in West Virginia.<sup>14</sup>
- Mountaintop removal, a destructive coal mining practice that blows up mountains with explosives and dumps waste rock in valley streams, has destroyed over 500 mountains and buried 1,000 miles of streams in Appalachia.<sup>15</sup>
- Coal mining in Appalachia causes higher rates of lung cancer; chronic heart, lung, and kidney disease; and deaths in local communities.<sup>16</sup>

## GenOn sites have been dumping waste in our communities.

- The plant's toxic coal ash was previously dumped at sites in Virginia and Maryland. Coal ash, which contains mercury, arsenic, and lead, leaches into the drinking water of communities near coal ash sites, causing increased rates of cancer and other illnesses.<sup>17</sup>
- Once dumped, the coal ash waste from the GenOn plant poses a serious risk to our communities. Last year, leaching from coal ash dumpsites now owned by GenOn in Maryland prompted the state's Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to investigate and sue for groundwater and water pollution violations.<sup>18</sup> This year, similar violations at two additional dumpsites now owned by GenOn were cited by the DEQ as grounds for potential lawsuits.<sup>19</sup>

## Coal plants like the GenOn plant are our local front in addressing climate change.

- Emissions from coal-fired power plants are our country's single greatest source of the pollution that causes global warming.
- Last year, the plant spewed hundreds of thousands of tons of climate pollution, as if nearly 15,000 additional cars were on the road.<sup>20</sup>
- Since 2001, 150 planned coal plants have been taken off the drawing board due to mounting public opposition and a lack of funding.<sup>21</sup>
- It's now time to turn our attention to the existing old, dirty coal plants that continue to pollute our neighborhoods and communities. We can take action on climate change now by retiring the GenOn coal plant permanently, and by investing instead in energy efficiency and cleaner power.

## The GenOn coal plant isn't even necessary!

- The GenOn coal plant provides only occasional generation to the grid, and does not directly power local homes and businesses.
- The GenOn coal plant produces less than 20% of the power it could at full capacity.<sup>22</sup> So despite the ongoing pollution and significant health burden the plant places on all of us, it isn't even playing a critical part in our region's larger energy system.

## The GenOn coal plant's site on the Alexandria waterfront could be put to better use.

- The plant imposes a health burden estimated at \$270,000 a year on our region.<sup>23</sup>
- Across Virginia, energy efficiency work could create 10,000 green jobs.<sup>24</sup>
- Development of the beautiful waterfront site where the plant now sits could generate significant revenue for the City of Alexandria without polluting the air and water and making people sick.
- Currently, both Austin and Chicago are in the process of putting old power plant sites to a healthier purpose. These cities are transforming these sites to include, variously, a learning facility, office space, shops, condominiums, hotels, event space, and an outdoor terrace.<sup>25</sup> Development of the Austin site is expected to create more than 200 jobs and produce \$2 million a year in tax revenue.<sup>26</sup>

## The GenOn plant sends the wrong message about our energy future.

- GenOn is the closest coal plant to Washington, DC, our nation's capital.<sup>27</sup> Join us to send a message about cleaner energy.