

WBR ARTICLE

EPA reconsiders CO2 emissions

By MJ Clark

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — Yesterday the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) granted a petition from the Sierra Club and other groups calling for reconsideration of a an 11th hour memo by the Bush administration's Environmental Protection Agency.

The memo in question was issued in December by former EPA Administrator Stephen Johnson, saying that carbon dioxide – considered to be the most prominent greenhouse gas contributing to global warming – was not a pollutant to be regulated when approving power plants.

"Today's announcement should cast significant further doubt on the approximately 100 coal-fired power plants that the industry is trying to rush through the permitting process without any limits on carbon dioxide," said David Bookbinder, chief climate counsel for the Sierra Club. "New coal plants were already a bad bet for investors and ratepayers and today's decisions make them an even bigger gamble."

According to a statement by the EPA, the agency will "vigorously review the Johnson memo to ensure that it is consistent with the Obama Administration's climate change strategy and interpretation of the Clean Air Act."

For legal reasons, the Johnson memo will remain in place until the EPA reconsideration process runs its course.

There was more bad news for the coal industry contained in the new stimulus package signed into law yesterday. The stimulus was lacking a \$50 billion loan guarantee program aimed at energy technology – including carbon capture and storage – that was stripped out of the final bill. The bill did contain a more modest \$3.4 billion for clean coal technology.

"The loan guarantees removed from the stimulus bill would have been a smart, practical way to create green jobs and address fossil fuel emissions," said John Thompson, director of the Coal Transition Project. "While it is popular in some circles to believe that fossil fuels are going away, we shouldn't bet the planet on it. We simply must build the infrastructure to reduce, store and ultimately eliminate fossil fuels' carbon-dioxide emissions."