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EXPERTS SEE RECORD AMOUNTS OF COAL-FIRED POWER SHUTTING DOWN THIS YEAR

Michael 12:02 PM 10/26/2018 | ENERGY

Bastasch | Energy Editor

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- A record 15.4 gigawatts of coal-fired power capacity could retire this year.
- The coal industry says most

coal generator shut downs are tied to EPA regulations.

- **Meanwhile, analysts expect coal exports to surge this year.**

President Donald Trump may have declared the “war on coal” over, but analysts still expect a record amounts of coal-fired power capacity to shut down by the end of the year.

“[A] total of 15.4 gigawatts (GW) of capacity to close in 2018 through the retirement of 44 units at 22 plants in more than a dozen states,” according to the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA).

IEEFA analyst Seth Feaster **wrote in a report** published Thursday that “the competitive environment for coal-fired power in the generation marketplace is becoming ever more challenging as the price of renewables continues to fall and as natural gas prices are expected to remain low for the foreseeable future.”

“At least 11 GW have already been closed this year, and the retirement trend is on pace to easily exceed the record 14.7 GW of coal-fired generation capacity closed in 2015,” Feaster wrote on behalf of IEEFA.

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Reports of coal plant closures come in stark contrast to news of strong coal exports. Analysts **expect U.S. coal exports to surge** another 10 percent this year, in contrast to expectations Americans will actually use less coal.



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Power Plant, a coal-fired power-plant owned by FirstEnergy, along the Ohio River in Stratton, Ohio, U.S., Sept. 10, 2017. Photograph taken at N40831.095' W80837.421'. Photograph taken Sept. 10, 2017. REUTERS/Brian Snyder.

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Coal plants are feeling the crunch of poor economics and onerous federal and state regulations. Plants have also been put under pressure from legal action and protests by environmentalists, including the Sierra Club. The group's "Beyond Coal" campaign recently **got \$64 million from former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg** to fight against the coal industry.

The utility First Energy asked the Trump administration in March to intervene to keep struggling coal and nuclear plants open. The Department of the Interior is also **trying to secure buyers** for a coal plant located in Navajo Nation. The Department of Energy's pitch to compensate baseload power plants was shot down by energy regulators earlier this year.

Trump has, so far, taken no executive action to keep power plants open, but the administration did **consider plans to use executive authority** under national security laws to stem the tide of closures. However, no official plan has been put forward.

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IEEFA expects “36.7GW of coal-fired capacity stand to be retired from 2018 through 2024 — 117 units in total” based on closures already announced by energy companies. Though that number could easily increase if regulatory and economic trends continue.

“The future of coal-fired generation assets in the U.S. is limited, with no new plants being built and a majority of existing plants 40 years old or older,” Feaster wrote.



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ISSUES ▼ SEND A TIP (ACCCE).

ACCCE found that “an additional 26,000 MW are expected to retire” from this year through 2020. In total, ACCCE noted the number of coal-fired generators already shut down or slated to retire comes to 637 through 2030.



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miners during a Make America Great Again rally at the Civic Center in Charleston, West Virginia, U.S., Aug. 21, 2018. REUTERS/Leah Millis.

About three-quarters of the coal-fired generators shut down or slated for closure can be attributed to Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) policies imposed during the Obama administration, according to ACCCE. In those cases, power plant operators explicitly cited regulations as a reason for shuttering coal capacity.

ACCCE has supported efforts by the Trump administration to roll back EPA regulations and figure out ways to keep struggling coal plants from closing. Most recently, the group [cheered replacing the Obama administration's Clean Power Plan](#) with the Affordable Clean Energy (ACE) rule.

The Clean Power Plan aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions from power plants, which meant many more coal plants would be forced to cease operations. ACE sets less onerous standards coal plant operators believe they can meet.

“The proposed rule is a sensible approach to regulating carbon dioxide emissions from the nation’s coal fleet,” ACCCE President Michelle Bloodworth said in early October.

The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) also expects a massive wave of coal-fired retirements by the end of the year. The amount of coal-fired capacity retired could very well exceed 2015's record levels — that year EPA implemented one of its costliest regulations ever.

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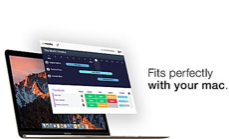


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