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## Report examines effects of global warming

O'Malley supports coalition's effort to curb greenhouse gases, reduce air pollution

February 02, 2007 | By Tom Pelton | Tom Pelton,sun reporter

Reducing global warming gases from power plants in Maryland will not hurt consumers or cause blackouts, but it will cut utility profits and require the state to import more electricity, according to a report released yesterday.

"This shows one can do good environmental policy that is also sound economically," said Matthias Ruth, principal investigator of the study led by the University of Maryland.

The 179-page report examines what will happen after July when Maryland joins a coalition of nine Northeastern states that have pledged a 10 percent trim in carbon dioxide emissions from coal-fired power plants by 2018. The conclusion that carbon dioxide generated by the burning of coal and oil is increasing the heat-trapping layer of greenhouse gases around the Earth is reinforced by a recent report by a panel of United Nations scientists. Power plants produce about a third of greenhouse gases, and the rising temperatures caused by these gases are melting glaciers and raising sea levels.

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Gov. Martin O'Malley supports Maryland's joining New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts and other Eastern states in a team effort to curb greenhouse gases, called the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, said his spokesman, Rick Abbruzzese.

"He feels that Maryland has an obligation to help reduce the effects of global warming and air pollution, not only for air quality standards but also to improve the health of the Chesapeake Bay," Abbruzzese said.

In an effort to cut pollution from power plants, the Maryland legislature last April passed the Healthy Air Act, which requires the state to join the greenhouse coalition by July. But, it gives the governor the power to pull out if he thinks it is hurting the state's economy. O'Malley's administration is studying the report. The study was required by the Healthy Air Act.

Last March, Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich Jr. urged legislators to vote against the greenhouse gas limit, warning that it will "dramatically increase the costs of electricity for consumers" and "potentially cause rolling blackouts across Maryland."

The University of Maryland researchers concluded these dire predictions were wrong. Cutting carbon dioxide emissions by 10 percent will not cause blackouts or raise electric rates, and will have a "modest positive environmental impact," they said.

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