



Cookerly Helps Power4Georgians Win Support for New Energy Generation Facilities

Overview

Power4Georgians is a consortium of 10 Georgia Electric Membership Cooperatives (EMCs) working together to ensure a continued supply of reliable and affordable energy for their members. Power4Georgians plans and develops new generation resources, maximizes existing energy sources, explores renewable energy options and promotes energy efficiency.

At present, the consortium is working toward obtaining environmental permits to develop Plant Washington, an environmentally-responsible 850 Megawatt, super-critical coal-fired power plant in Washington County, Georgia

Objective

Cookerly Public Relations has been charged with helping Power4Georgians educate community members, lawmakers, regulators and the approximately 700,000 members of the partner EMCs about the vital need for this facility, its economic benefits and the environmental controls that make Plant Washington significantly cleaner than older coal-fired facilities. In addition, the agency is charged with countering negative and often inaccurate information propagated by groups opposed to coal power generation and mining.

Strategy & Tactics

The agency worked hand-in-hand with Power4Georgians management to develop a comprehensive communications plan that employs a variety of tactics but also can be easily adjusted to respond to new developments, opposition tactics and regulatory input.

Focusing on telling the story of Plant Washington, validating the need for it and refuting misinformation, Cookerly developed a suite of communication documents and presentations, and coordinated a series of public meetings to provide detailed information about the project to the Washington County community. The agency has also prepared press releases, guest editorials and letters to the editor as needed to ensure consistent and supportive messaging.

In addition, briefings for private citizens, presentations to business and civic groups and a comprehensive Web site (www.power4georgians.com) have all been undertaken to demonstrate transparency and cooperation, and to assure that every educational opportunity is maximized; Power4Georgians representatives also have made presentations and/or provided information on Plant Washington to members at the annual meetings of all ten partner EMCs.



Highlights

Cookerly developed a messaging strategy that resulted in a successful announcement of the Plant Washington project.

Two public information fairs attracted more than 300 local residents.

The communications program has helped the client achieve widespread public support for Plant Washington and has resulted in balanced media coverage.



Results

Two public information fairs attracted more than 300 local citizens, and more than two dozen guest editorials and letters-to-the editor appeared in the Washington County newspapers (*Sandersville Progress* and *Washington Spotlight*) and other state newspapers in the first six months after plans were announced. Additionally, the agency has secured balanced coverage about the plant with Reuters and in several Georgia newspapers - e.g. *Macon Telegraph*, *Athens Banner-Herald* and more.

Plant Washington enjoys overwhelming support from the general public, local office holders and business and civic groups in Washington County. In addition, a majority of the members of the 10 Power4Georgians EMCs support the project as a long-term solution that will ensure affordable and reliable electricity for their families and businesses.