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Lawsuit alleges trouble at Paradise

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A conservation group and two Kentucky residents sued the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in Washington yesterday, charging that the agency has failed to address air pollution problems at the Tennessee Valley Authority's Paradise power plant in Western Kentucky.

The lawsuit was filed in federal court in Washington by the Center for Biological Diversity, Hilary Lambert of Lexington, and Preston Forsythe, who lives about seven miles from the coal-fired power plant in Muhlenberg County.

The plaintiffs allege that the EPA has for years failed to remedy the Paradise plant's emissions of sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides and particulate matter, including pollutants that the agency itself has identified as hazardous to the environment and human health.

The suit also contends that the Paradise plant's operating permit, issued by the state of Kentucky, is deficient because it does not require the facility to operate modern pollution control equipment year-round. It further charges that the EPA has violated the federal Clear Air Act by failing to modify or revoke the permit.

Last year the Paradise plant was listed as one of the nation's 50 dirtiest coal-fired power plants in a survey by a Washington-based group, the

Environmental Integrity Project.

Hilary Lambert said yesterday that she joined the lawsuit because she's concerned that Mammoth Cave National Park gets the brunt of airborne pollution that winds carry eastward from the Paradise plant. That helps give Mammoth Cave "the dubious distinction of having the third-worst air quality of any national park in the country," she said.

Lambert said she hopes the lawsuit will "push EPA a little bit to encourage Paradise to clean up their act."

Forsythe, who has lived much of his life within sight of the stacks at Paradise, says the plume of pollution from the plant occasionally drifts over his home, but usually travels eastward toward Mammoth Cave.

"I'm interested strictly as a resident who lives close to Paradise, sees the pollution every day and wonders why it's allowed," Forsythe said. "I know the plant provides a lot of jobs; I know it provides cheap electricity; but at what price?"