

Regulators want say in Duke

State says it has a duty to look out for the public interest on utilities

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South Carolina wants a seat at the table when North Carolina regulators take up the proposed merger between Duke En-

ergy and Progress Energy. Duke's Scott, executive director of the South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff, said his agency has asked to join the proceedings in Raleigh as part of its job of protecting South Car-

olina's public interest in utility matters.

Duke spokesman Tom Williams declined comment.

Duke and Progress asked North Carolina regulators for permission to merge their holding companies, but they didn't seek the same approval in South Carolina, Scott said.

They are seeking South Carolina's approval to merge their operating companies, but that's not expected to take place for some time.

By seeking to join the decision-making in North Carolina, "We're trying to get a seat at the negotiating tables wherever they may be," Scott first told Green-

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villeonline.com. Charlotte-based Duke is the dominant provider of electricity in the Upstate and Raleigh-based P

merger

gress announced in January a \$26 billion plan to merge and create the nation's largest regulated utility.

Duke has about 600,000 customers in the Upstate. Progress has about 200,000 customers in South Carolina's Pee Dee region.