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Sierra Club Files Legal Action to Force U.S. EPA to Address Unsafe Texas Air Pollution
Legal Action Targets Texas Coal Fleet, including Largest SO2 Emitter in the U.S.

Austin, TX - Today, the Sierra Club [announced its intent to sue](#) the Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for the failure to require a clean up plan for the continuing dangerous sulfur dioxide (SO2) pollution in Rusk and Panola Counties. This area in northeast Texas is home to the single-largest source of SO2 pollution in the country, the Martin Lake coal-fired power plant. Sulfur dioxide pollution is not only harmful by itself in the immediate area, but it contributes to fine particulate matter which travels downwind, endangering families across Texas. In fact, a recent public health analysis demonstrated that SO2 pollution from Martin Lake contributes to significant downwind impacts including more than 100 premature deaths annually; thousands of asthma attacks and lost work and school days; and more than \$1 billion in public health costs every year.

In 2016, EPA found that several areas in Texas exceeded public health standards set for SO2. These areas, in Freestone, Anderson, Milam, Rusk, Panola Counties and Titus Counties, were formally designated "non-attainment" for SO2 due to emissions from three large coal-fired power plants---Big Brown, Monticello, and Martin Lake. According to the Clean Air Act, Texas was required to submit a plan to bring the designated areas into compliance with the health-based standard by July 12, 2018. Texas failed to submit a plan. In turn, EPA failed to make a formal determination on the matter

Sierra Club's legal action today signals its intent to sue EPA over a failure to act. Two of the plants, Big Brown and Monticello, retired in 2018, but the Martin Lake plant still operates and has increased its SO2 emissions every year since the initial finding that nearby air was unsafe to breathe. In fact, Martin Lake's 2018 SO2 emissions more than doubled compared to 2016, the year EPA finalized the non-attainment area intended to reduce SO2 pollution.

"We know that Martin Lake is the biggest source of sulfur dioxide in the country and this must be addressed by the EPA," **said Misti O'Quinn, Organizing Representative for Sierra Club's Beyond Coal Campaign.** "The harsh impacts of its pollution are felt from Beckville to Tatum in more rural East Texas, all the way to my doorstep and further into the DFW area. The air quality is the determining factor in whether my children can play outside or are confined indoors. The reality of non-adherence to this rule is an asthma attack. I am not the only person/parent living with this as a reality. By stepping up and enforcing the setting of strong sulfur dioxide pollution protections already on the books, Texas kids can be kids and we as parents and communities can breathe a little easier."

“EPA’s refusal to act here is yet another example of Trump’s EPA failing to protect families in Texas from dangerous pollution,” **said Joshua Smith, Senior Attorney with Sierra Club’s Beyond Coal Campaign.** “Years ago, EPA took the first important step by identifying these areas as out of compliance with the national standard. But that is little help to those exposed to this dangerous pollution, unless EPA takes the required action to make sure there is a plan in place to reduce the sulfur dioxide pollution from the top polluter in the country.”

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