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Sierra Club Pressures Feds to Clean Up Air Pollution at Four Corners Power Plant

*Sierra Club hopes to clean up the
West's last unregulated coal fired power plant and one of the nation's dirtiest*

Santa Fe, NM The Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club went to court today to force the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to set pollution limits for the Four Corners coal-fired power plant, located on the Navajo Reservation in northwest New Mexico. The Four Corners plant is the only coal-fired power plant in the nation to operate without enforceable federal, state or tribal pollution limits for significant pollutants such as particulate matter and nitrogen oxides.

The suit filed today in U.S. District Court cited EPA's failure to develop a clear, enforceable plan for cleaning up the Four Corners Power Plant's pollution, which is linked to ground level ozone and myriad of respiratory illnesses.

"The Four Corners Power Plant is one of the dirtiest in the nation, and there is no good reason why the facility shouldn't use modern pollution controls," said Doug Frasier, Sierra Club's Rio Grande Chapter Air Quality Chair. "With the proposed Desert Rock coal plant on the horizon, San Juan county residents will need all the help they can get to ensure they can breathe clean air."

The Four Corners coal-fired power plant, located on the Navajo Reservation in northwest New Mexico, is one of the largest power plants in the country, generating 2,040 megawatts. (The average power plant in the United States generates 213 megawatts.) The plant has existed in a regulatory vacuum for many years. Since this plant has been able to operate without any meaningful federal, state or tribal emission limits, the plant emits an astonishing amount of pollution. Every year the plant emits over 15 million tons of sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, particulate matter, and carbon dioxide emissions and 590 pounds of mercury (a known neurotoxin). The plant's annual emission of nitrogen oxides, 40,742 tons, is the highest of all coal-fired power plants in the nation and is equivalent to the emissions from approximately 2 million vehicles driven 15,000 miles a year.

If the Four Corners power plant were required to meet enforceable pollution limits and to adopt cleaner technologies, air quality would be dramatically improved. For instance, installing selective catalytic reduction technology at the facility would reduce nitrogen oxide emissions by as much as 90%; increasing the efficiency of the scrubbers would greatly reduce sulfur dioxide emissions; and retrofitting the facility with high efficiency bag houses would significantly decrease particulate matter emissions.

"As long as EPA fails to act, the people who live downwind of this notorious polluter are put in harm's way," said the Sierra Club's Andy Bessler, who works with tribes throughout the Southwest. "It's time to solve this problem for the good of us all."

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