

PRESS RELEASE

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RELEASE CONSERVATION AND TRIBAL GROUPS SEEK ACTION ON COAL PLANT POLLUTION

Power Plant Causes Haze Over Grand Canyon and Other Western Parks

Washington, D.C. — A group of conservation and tribal organizations today petitioned the National Park Service to declare that the pollution from the coal-fired Navajo Generating Station in Page, Arizona, is clouding views of Grand Canyon National Park. This action follows a call last week from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for a review of the permit for Desert Rock, a proposed coal-fired power plant in New Mexico that, if built, would pollute 27 national parks in the region, including the Grand Canyon.

“Requiring more efficient pollution control equipment at the Navajo plant would bring cleaner air to the Grand Canyon,” said National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) Clean Air Counsel Stephanie Kodish. “Our petition takes an important step towards protecting Americans’ health and Western national park treasures by identifying this plant as a source of excessive pollution and triggering the need for meaningful emission reductions.”

The Navajo Generating Station is the eighth-largest coal-fired power plant complex in the country, and has been emitting damaging levels of haze-causing fine particles and nitrogen oxides for more than 30 years. In 1986, the Department of the Interior found that sulfur dioxide emissions from the plant, which is located less than 12 miles from Grand Canyon National Park, were contributing to haze in the park, and required plant owners to install sulfur scrubbers. Unfortunately, scrubbers alone have not been sufficient; dirty smoke from this coal-fired power plant creates a brown haze that reduces visibility and threatens the health of residents, park visitors, and wildlife.

NPCA, the Sierra Club, Grand Canyon Trust, Diné CARE, To Nizhoni Ani, and San Juan Citizens Alliance have petitioned the National Park Service to formally declare to the EPA that the Navajo Generating Station’s particulate matter and nitrogen oxides emissions are directly responsible for impairing the air quality of one of our country’s most beloved parks.

A certification of visibility impairment from the National Park Service would require the EPA to order the plant to install Best Available Retrofit Technology to reduce its emissions. The level of pollution allowed would also be subject to public oversight.

“Navajo Generating Station doesn’t emit as much sulfur dioxide as it used to, but its



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other pollutants continue to obscure visibility throughout the Grand Canyon region,” said Roger Clark, Grand Canyon Trust’s air and energy program director.

“It’s time that coal plants are required to account for their externalities and our national treasures protected with measures to improve visibility, reduce emissions, and safeguard public health,” said Mike Eisenfeld, New Mexico energy coordinator for the San Juan Citizens Alliance.

According to the group’s petition, recent modeling by the National Park Service and eye-witness accounts show that pollution from the plant continues to obscure priceless views within and outside of the park. The NPS also found ten other national parks and national forests that are congressionally-designated Class I airsheds may also have had their air quality harmed by this coal plant.

“Grand Canyon is a national treasure, and should be protected,” said Kevin Dahl, NPCA Arizona program manager. “With more than 4 million visitors every year, this park is also an important economic resource for northern Arizona and the entire southwest. Allowing haze to ruin its impressive natural vistas hurts people’s livelihoods.”

Stacey Hamburg of the Sierra Club’s Grand Canyon Protection Campaign agrees. “People throughout Arizona see and feel the impacts from dirty coal plants such as the Navajo Generating Station. Continued pollution from coal plants not only negatively affects the Grand Canyon and other public lands we enjoy, but it makes global warming worse for everyone. Now is the time for the Navajo Generating Station owners, including Salt River Project, to utilize the best available technology for the plant and to begin to transition off dirty coal all together and move towards a clean energy future with wind and solar.”

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