

*[Correction: A previous version of this press statement said that the Sierra Club's NOI was announced on August 23, 2019. It has been corrected to the actual announcement date of August 20, 2019]*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Sierra Club condemns the Environmental Protection Agency's Rollback of SO<sub>2</sub> pollution standards for Texas Coal plants**

*EPA fails to address the nation's largest source of SO<sub>2</sub> pollution at Martin Lake*

**Austin, TX** -- Today, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed to "correct" (more accurately, abandon) its determination that three areas around the largest and dirtiest coal plants in Texas--Luminant's Martin Lake, Big Brown, and Monticello plants--are failing to meet the public health standards set for sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) pollution. EPA's action today, if finalized, would rollback important public health safeguards for the communities surrounding the nation's largest source of SO<sub>2</sub> pollution, the Martin Lake coal-burning power plant, even though all the available monitoring and modeling data demonstrate that air quality surrounding the plant is unhealthy to breathe.

After designating the areas surrounding Luminant's coal plants as violating the health-based national standard for SO<sub>2</sub> pollution, EPA never took steps to address the dangerous levels of pollution caused by those plants. In 2018, Luminant retired two of its highest-polluting and most uneconomic plants--Big Brown and Monticello-- but the Martin Lake power plant continues to operate and is now the largest source of dangerous sulfur dioxide pollution in the country. And nearly three years after EPA determined that the air in the county surrounding Martin Lake is unsafe to breathe, there is still no plan in place to address this pollution. On Tuesday, August 20, 2019, the Sierra Club [announced its intent to sue](#) the Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for the failure to comply with the Clean Air Act and fulfill the requirement to clean up the continuing dangerous sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) pollution.

EPA's proposed rollback of public health protections for Texas is based on purported errors that the State of Texas and Luminant identified with the air quality modeling underlying EPA's initial designations. But EPA was aware of, and rejected or addressed, those criticisms when the agency issued the initial rule. In fact, the only new information available since the initial designations confirms that the area surrounding Martin Lake is violating the health based SO<sub>2</sub> standard. Indeed, an air quality monitor approved by Texas and EPA, and installed near the Martin Lake power plant, confirms, based on the last three years of data, that pollution from the Martin Lake coal plant is creating unsafe air quality for the people of Texas.

**In response, Chrissy Mann, Senior Campaign Representative with the Sierra Club's Beyond Coal Campaign released the following statement:**

This rulemaking is EPA's latest effort to undermine the rule of law by attempting to ignore the present air quality issues and rewrite the solid technical record that supports EPA's earlier nonattainment designations. Meanwhile, emissions near Martin Lake demonstrate that this site continues to violate the health standard and is emitting more pollution than before. SO<sub>2</sub> pollution from Martin Lake has more than doubled since 2016, and the plant is now the single largest emitter of dangerous sulfur dioxide in the country. Instead of ignoring this pollution, EPA should solve problems and require this plant to clean up its act.

**About the Sierra Club**

The Sierra Club is America's largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization, with more than 3.5 million members and supporters. In addition to protecting every person's right to get outdoors and access the healing power of nature, the Sierra Club works to promote clean energy, safeguard the health of our communities, protect wildlife, and preserve our remaining wild places through grassroots activism, public education, lobbying, and legal action. For more information, visit [www.sierraclub.org](http://www.sierraclub.org).