



January 19, 2023

Contact: Emma Pabst, [emma.pabst@sierraclub.org](mailto:emma.pabst@sierraclub.org), (512) 228-9705

## Sierra Club Intervenes to Support Tolk Coal Plant Early Retirement

*Closing Panhandle coal plant would preserve groundwater and benefit ratepayers*

**Lubbock, TX** – On Wednesday, Sierra Club [intervened](#) in Xcel Energy’s recent rate case to support retiring the Texas-based Tolk coal plant ahead of schedule. The case will be overseen by the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission (PRC) and is the first step in Xcel’s efforts to retire Tolk by 2028 – four years earlier than the company’s previous goal. Xcel estimates that the early retirement of Tolk will ultimately save customers \$100 million.

“Early retirement of the Tolk coal plant is great news for North Texas communities and the environment,” **said Emma Pabst, representative for the Sierra Club’s Beyond Coal Campaign.** “Closing this plant early, as Xcel wants to do, will decrease pollution, save customers millions, and stop a dirty, old facility from using millions of gallons of groundwater, a precious and scarce resource for the area. We look forward to ensuring that the company is able to gain approval from regulators in Texas and New Mexico in order to do so.”

Tolk is a coal-fired power plant located in the Texas Panhandle that produces electricity for customers in New Mexico and Texas. It sits atop the rapidly depleting Ogallala Aquifer, from which it withdraws significant amounts of water to use for cooling. Xcel plans to replace the plant’s generation with renewables, which will help it achieve its commendable goal of 100% clean energy by 2050. A New Mexico hearing examiner will soon establish a procedural schedule for the case, including hearing dates and comment deadlines. In addition to seeking approval from the New Mexico PRC, Xcel will also need to win approval from Texas regulators –

the Public Utility Commission – to move up the plant’s retirement date. Advocates expect the company to make this filing in Texas in early 2023.

Xcel’s move to retire the plant comes after years of outcry from community members and advocates, including a 2020 [settlement agreement](#) between Xcel Energy and Sierra Club that required the company to formally evaluate the plant’s economic decline and water use. In 2021, [Tolk released 2.9 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions](#), 4.9 million pounds of nitrogen oxide pollution, and 13.8 million pounds of sulfur dioxide emissions into the air.

"Closing the Tolk coal power plant early is a positive step toward New Mexico’s goal to source 100% of our power from renewables," **said Howie Dash, Southern New Mexico Chair of the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter.** "Removal of the dirtiest form of power generation will help protect New Mexicans from the worst impacts of the climate crisis, including breathing unhealthy air."

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