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Public Health, Parks, Faith, and Navajo Clean Energy Supporters Say “No More Delays” in Reducing Pollution from NGS Coal Plant

Phoenix– Today, outside an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) open house, a coalition of Navajo clean energy supporters, health advocates, and conservationists delivered a message to the EPA asking for “No More Delays” in cleaning up one of Arizona’s biggest polluters – the Navajo Generating Station (NGS).

“Navajo Generating Station is one of the most polluting coal plants in the country and has fouled world-renowned Grand Canyon for far too long,” **said Sandy Bahr, chapter director for Sierra Club’s Grand Canyon Chapter**. “It also pollutes at least ten other places treasured by Arizonans, including other national parks and wilderness areas. This plant deserves no special exceptions that delay clean up.”

In terms of air pollution, health impacts, and smog impacts on important national parks - including Grand Canyon - NGS is among the worst of all coal plants in the country. The aging coal plant emits 16,000 tons of nitrogen oxide pollution, a key ingredient in haze pollution, each year.

“For decades, the Navajo Generating Station has been spewing pollution into the air that the downwind communities breathe” **said Dr. George Thurston, Professor of Environmental Medicine at the NYU School of Medicine**. “Health damages linked to NGS cost approximately \$13 million dollars in health impacts each year.”

According to a new study cited by Dr. Thurston, more than five hundred extra asthma exacerbation days, hundreds of lost work days, and between two to five extra deaths in the State of Arizona are linked to the health impacts that air pollution from Navajo Generating Station has on surrounding communities each year that the Best Available Control Technology is not applied to the plant.

As the EPA considers plans to reduce pollution at NGS to meet the requirements of the Clean Air Act, significant issues remain over proposed delays, enforceability, and clear pathways to a clean energy transition. While there is now a growing consensus recognizing that pollution from the massive Navajo Generating Station coal plant must be addressed to protect human health and restore the splendor of Grand Canyon National Park and seven other national parks, major concerns remain.

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“EPA must honor the five-year compliance schedule for NGS to install pollution controls, just as it has with other coal plants” **said Elsa Johnson, Navajo tribal member**. “This time frame is critical to protecting public health for the Navajo and Hopi communities because we live closest to the plants and are most exposed to the harmful toxins and particulates from their smokestacks.”

“Metro-Phoenix and southern Arizona do not have to contend with pollution from most of Arizona’s coal-fired power plants, whereas the Navajos and Hopi reservation are surrounded by five plants,” **continued Johnson**. “Every single day that goes by makes a difference in our health, especially for our children and elderly whose lungs are most vulnerable.”

“In addition to the human health impacts and the smog it causes over Grand Canyon and other national parks, Navajo Generating Station is the single largest individual source of climate-disrupting pollution in Arizona, and the eighth largest single source in the United States,” **said Rev. Doug Bland, Executive Director of Arizona Interfaith Power and Light**. “It must be cleaned up – and the sooner the better – for our health, our parks, and for future generations that will have to deal with the impacts of climate change.”

The Technical Work Group (TWG) proposal being pushed by Salt River Project (SRP), the operators of NGS, lacks an enforceable path to end coal’s dirty legacy in the region. The proposal also lacks a pathway to bring about development of renewable energy to tribal lands.

“Compared to other states, Arizonans don’t want less or slower progress on cleaning up coal and moving to clean energy - in fact, we want more,” **said Bret Fanshaw, state advocate for Environment Arizona**. “Polling by Colorado College shows that out of six interior western states (AZ, NM, CO, UT, MT, WY), Arizonans expressed the highest preference for solar (74%) and the lowest for gas (20%) and coal (6%) out of all six states.”

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