

September 28, 2010

DTE's Dirty Expansion: Illegal Effort to Avoid Coal Plant Clean Up

Sierra Club, NRDC Join U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in Action Against Detroit Edison's Dirty, Dangerous Monroe Power Plant

(DETROIT, MI)—The Sierra Club and Natural Resources Defense Council intervened as plaintiffs in an ongoing U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Clean Air Act enforcement action against DTE Energy September 28th. EPA's lawsuit alleges that DTE unlawfully extended the life of Unit 2 of its dirty and dangerous Monroe coal-fired power plant in Michigan without installing the pollution controls needed to protect public health.

"DTE Energy tried to sneak around their responsibility to control the harmful pollution from the expansion of its Monroe plant," said James Gignac, Midwest Director of Sierra Club's Beyond Coal Campaign. "The Clean Air Act exists to protect people from potentially deadly pollution. By trying to side-step these rules, DTE is putting people in Michigan in harm's way."

Additional pollution from this plant simply adds insult to injury for southeastern Michigan residents. A September 2010 report published by the Clean Air Task Force identifies Monroe as the most harmful coal-fired power plant in the entire country, estimating that 278 deaths, 206 hospital admissions, and 445 heart attacks can be attributed to Monroe's pollution in 2010.

"It is long past time that this nearly 40-year-old dinosaur is cleaned up or shut down," said Shannon Fisk, Senior Attorney in the Midwest Office of the Natural Resources Defense Council. "Unit 2 of the DTE Monroe coal plant is the single largest emitter of harmful sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides in all of Michigan."

In March of 2010, DTE began a major modification to its Monroe plant in order to extend the operating life of the aging facility. The Monroe plant is in an area that EPA has classified as being "out of attainment" with national public health based air quality standards, and the major modifications at Monroe should have triggered a Clean Air Act requirement for DTE to install modern pollution controls, which would protect people from harmful pollution coming from the plant.

The Sierra Club and NRDC's intervention adds substantial value to the EPA case against DTE. As two of the leading environmental advocacy organizations in the country, with active membership in Michigan, the Sierra Club and NRDC will work with EPA to ensure the appropriate process is observed and that DTE is not allowed to unlawfully endanger people in Michigan by increasing the pollution emitted from the Monroe plant. Please contact David Graham-Caso or Josh Mogergerman (contact information provided above) for a copy of the intervention filing.

For more information about the Sierra Club's Beyond Coal campaign in Michigan, please visit <http://www.sierraclub.org/coal/mi/>

For more information about the Natural Resources Defense Council, please visit <http://www.nrdc.org/>