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EPA Rejects NMU Coal Plant, Protects Upper Peninsula Jobs and Future

Flawed coal plant permit sent back to drawing board, must consider CO2

LANSING – In a decision released yesterday, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency rejected Northern Michigan University’s air permit for its proposed coal plant in Marquette, a decision that shifts Michigan’s priorities away from coal and toward renewable energy and 21st century jobs.

Along with identifying several deficiencies, the EPA’s Environmental Appeals Board ruling ordered Michigan’s Department of Environmental Quality to consider regulating carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases.

“This is a yet another clear signal that pollution from coal plants, especially global warming pollution, can no longer be ignored. The increased costs that will come from impending carbon regulations will make coal much more expensive than cleaner energy alternatives, like wind and efficiency,” said **Anne Woiwode**, Michigan Sierra Club State Director. “The writing is on the wall; Michigan needs to start moving away from coal if we want to be a player in the 21st century clean energy economy.”

NMU’s proposal was the first of an overwhelming eight proposed coal plants in the state and the first coal plant to receive an air permit from Michigan regulators in more than 20 years. Permits for other coal plants— many of them containing the same air quality flaws as the NMU permit— have been put on hold as a result of Governor Granholm’s clean energy executive directive released earlier this month. The directive pauses the coal rush to allow time for the state to take a hard look at cleaner energy technologies available.

“This decision makes it clear that following business-as-usual approaches like new coal plants is no longer an option,” according to **Lee Sprague**, Sierra Club’s Clean Energy Campaign Manager. “Thanks to Governor Granholm’s actions our state is already poised to move beyond dirty coal to newer, cleaner, more efficient energy technologies that can help both our economy and our climate recover.”

EPA’s decision to reject the NMU plant is consistent with its decision last fall to deny a proposed coal plant in Utah that also failed to consider carbon dioxide limits. It comes on the heels of Lisa Jackson, President Obama’s EPA Administrator, announcing earlier this week the agency will reconsider a memorandum issued in the final days of the Bush Administration which sought to prohibit global warming pollution controls.

“Yesterday’s rejection of the NMU coal plant is further evidence that change has come, science is back, and greenhouse gas regulations are coming very soon,” said **James Gignac**, Midwest

Director of Sierra Club's Beyond Coal Campaign.

The Environmental Appeals Board decision is at:

[http://yosemite.epa.gov/oa/EAB_Web_Docket.nsf/Recent~Additions/06DBEC31EBFD8C3E852575620052318B/\\$File/Denying%20and%20Remanding...79.pdf](http://yosemite.epa.gov/oa/EAB_Web_Docket.nsf/Recent~Additions/06DBEC31EBFD8C3E852575620052318B/$File/Denying%20and%20Remanding...79.pdf)