

State Agency Deals a Death Blow to Coal Plants

MPSC staff says no need for new coal plants in Michigan until at least 2022

LANSING – Concerned citizens declared a major victory today after the Michigan Public Service Commission staff dealt a death blow to two controversial dirty coal plant projects, rejecting in a filing today the construction of one in Rogers City and delaying a decision on a second one in Bay City until 2022.

“These critical decisions mean Michigan is ready to open the door to clean energy jobs and walk away from dirty coal,” **Sierra Club-Michigan Executive Director Anne Woiwode** said. “For years, the people of Michigan spoke loud and clear: No more dirty coal and yes to clean renewable energy. And dirty coal and yes to clean renewable energy. And today, the citizens of Michigan have a much-deserved victory in the fight to build a strong, clean energy future.”

Environmental leaders credited a portion of today’s victory to Governor Granholm’s decision last year to submit the coal decision to a rigorous review by Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) staff and the state Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

After receiving over 8,000 comments and technical filings, the MPSC staff advised the DEQ in a filing today that there is no need for the power from a proposed coal plant in Rogers City, requested by Wolverine Power Supply Cooperative. The agency staff also advised that the proposed expansion of Consumers Energy’s Karn Weadock plant in Essexville was not needed until at least 2022, five years after Consumers’ original proposed start date. The recommendations stemmed from the failure of the utilities to show that Michigan needs more energy in coming years. The utilities also failed to counter growing evidence that renewable energy and energy efficiency – and not dirty coal – could meet future needs.

“Now that we have beaten back the threat of dirty coal, Michigan can begin the work of building a full-fledged 21st century energy future driven by clean renewable energy, and create good-paying jobs in the process,” **Clean Water Action-Michigan Director Cyndi Roper** said. “By 2020, Michigan will be a leader in clean energy technology, our nation will have tough new clean energy laws and stronger pollution standards will be in place. Michigan now has a tremendous opportunity to fully invest in clean energy, not dirty coal, to attract new jobs and move Michigan forward.”

“This report shows that clean energy can power Michigan’s future,” said **Faith Bugel, Senior Attorney at the Environmental Law & Policy Center**. “We’ve been sending our money down a mineshaft for too long. Moving away from outdated coal power will build our economy and protect our environment. The citizens of Michigan deserve applause for standing up for a clean energy future.”

Thousands of comments were submitted in opposition to the development of the Rogers City and Bay City new dirty coal plants in Michigan. Citizens groups have repeatedly called on the government to reject permits to build new plants and invest instead in clean energy.

A final decision on whether to grant Clean Air Act permits to Wolverine and Consumers Energy rests with the state Department of Environmental Quality, which promises a ruling by the end of the year.

According to a new report by the Natural Resources Defense Council, Michigan can meet its energy needs through a combination of wind power, biomass, and other renewable energy sources biomass, and other renewable energy sources coupled with aggressive energy efficiency programs.^[1] The report was issued as the Michigan Public Service Commission prepares to make recommendations to the Department of Environmental Quality on the need for power and availability of cleaner alternative to coal, following the end of a public comments period. Among the NRDC's findings:

Energy efficiency program alone could save Michigan \$3 billion in electricity costs over the next 20 years. Michigan's previous energy plan, written in 2007, is out of date, with unrealistic projections of future electrical demand, limited implementation of energy efficiency and renewable energy, and reliance on outdated 20th century coal technologies. Clean renewable energy is less expensive, cleaner, faster, more economically robust, and creates more jobs in Michigan than a 20th century plan based on new but obsolete large power plants driven by fossil fuels.

[1] Natural Resources Defense Council, "[A Green Energy Alternative for Michigan](http://docs.nrdc.org/energy/ene_09081101.asp)," http://docs.nrdc.org/energy/ene_09081101.asp