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Citizens urge Granholm to reject dirty coal amid public opposition

New study shows Michigan benefits all around from clean energy, energy efficiency as thousands oppose dirty coal projects

Lansing – With 8,000 citizens opposing the development of new dirty coal plants in Michigan, citizens groups are calling on Gov. Jennifer Granholm to reject permits to build new plants and invest instead in clean energy – something a landmark new report recommends could jumpstart Michigan's economy and create jobs.

The public comment period for the last of two coal plant proposals ended Monday and now a decision on the plants rests with the Granholm administration.

"The people of Michigan have spoken and the message is loud and clear: No dirty coal, more clean renewable energy," Clean Water Action–Michigan Executive Director Cyndi Roper said. "Gov. Jennifer Granholm slowed the rush to build new coal plants by forcing the coal and power industry to prove there were no feasible and prudent alternatives to meet Michigan's energy needs – and they failed. Now we call on her to take the only possible next step and that's rejecting the two dirty coal plant proposals in Rogers City by Wolverine Power Supply Cooperative and Bay City by Consumers Energy. We also call on her to help set in motion the decommissioning of some existing dirty coal plants owned by Consumers Energy that the company identifies as the 'oldest fleet in the nation.'"

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 coupled with aggressive energy efficiency programs. The report comes 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- Michigan's previous energy plan, written in 2007, is out of date, with unrealistic projections of future electrical demand, limited implementation of energy efficiency and renewable energy, and reliance on outdated 20th century coal technologies.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.

"Gov. Jennifer Granholm has the opportunity to set Michigan on the path to clean energy and away from building any new dirty coal plants that will send Michigan backwards," said Sierra Club Michigan Chapter Director Anne Woiwode. "The governor has been leading the charge to turn Michigan into a hub of clean energy production for the nation. Doing so will create thousands of jobs in the rapidly growing field of renewable energy and protect our land, air and water. It's a win-win for Michigan – and this landmark new Natural Resources Defense Council report shows how."

The citizens groups called on Granholm to put the final nail in the coffin for the new coal plant projects in Michigan after the DEQ ended public comments on the proposed Bay City coal plant on August 11 and one in Rogers City Monday. At one point, Michigan faced up to eight possible new coal plants – more than

any other state. Intense public pressure campaigns prevented a rubber stamp of at least three coal projects, including Rogers City and Bay City. Citizens also called on the governor to begin decommissioning Consumers Energy's oldest, most polluting coal plants.

"Closing the door to coal plants will protect public health and create 21st Century clean energy jobs," Progress Michigan Executive Director David Holtz said. "Governor Jennifer Granholm has led the charge to build a clean energy future for Michigan. She can help us win the battle against dirty coal once and for all by walking away from coal permanently and investing our resources and our talents in wind, solar and other forms of renewable clean energy."

Clean Water Action, Sierra Club and NRDC were joined by a number of other organizations in challenging the proposed coal permits, including the Environmental Law & Policy Center.