

EPA Proposal for Navajo Generating Station Cuts Harmful Emissions 84%, Improves Visibility at National Parks, Protects Public Health

(1/18/13) SAN FRANCISCO: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is proposing air pollution limits for Navajo Generating Station, one of the largest sources of harmful nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions in the country. The 2,250 megawatt power coal-fired power plant is located on the Navajo Nation, less than 20 miles from the Grand Canyon, near Page, Ariz. and the Utah state line.

Today's action aims to improve visibility, as required by Congress under the Clean Air Act, at 11 national parks and wilderness areas in the Southwest. Each year, more than 4 million people visit the Grand Canyon. However, many visitors cannot fully appreciate the spectacular vistas because of the veil of white or brown haze that hangs in the air, reducing visibility and dulling the natural beauty. Today's proposal would reduce the visibility impact from Navajo Generating Station (NGS) by an average 73% at the national parks and wilderness areas. It will also help protect public health – NOx reacts with other chemicals in the air to form ozone and fine particles, both associated with asthma, bronchitis, emphysema, and even premature death.

“By reducing emissions 84%, we will be able to breathe cleaner, healthier air and preserve the visibility essential to the economic vitality of the region,” said Jared Blumenfeld, EPA’s Regional Administrator for the Pacific Southwest. “The millions of tourists who visit national parks in Arizona and Utah every year will now be able see vistas once marred by pollution.”

EPA’s proposed emission limit can be achieved by installing an effective, readily available pollution control technology known as Selective Catalytic Reduction, which, in combination with the existing low-NOx burners the facility voluntarily installed between 2009 and 2011, would reduce emissions by 84%, or a total of 28,500 tons per year, by 2018.

EPA is proposing to give the plant an additional five years, until 2023, to install new controls to achieve the emission limit. This flexibility recognizes the importance of NGS to numerous tribes, and the environmental benefits provided by the early installation of low-NOx burners in 2009. EPA is also requesting comments on other options that could set longer timeframes for installing pollution controls if the facility can achieve additional emission reductions. EPA is prepared to issue a supplemental proposal if other approaches satisfy the Clean Air Act requirements and meet the stakeholders’ needs.

EPA has engaged extensively with local tribes, the Salt River Project, the Central Arizona Project, the agricultural community and other stakeholders regarding impacts on power and water costs. EPA took into consideration more than 6,700 comments since the advanced notice of proposed rulemaking was first published in 2009.

Earlier this month, a joint statement signed by the EPA, Department of the Interior and Department of Energy commits each agency to helping develop “clean, affordable and reliable power, affordable and sustainable water supplies, and sustainable economic development, while minimizing negative impacts on those who currently obtain significant benefits from NGS, including tribal nations.”

NGS is co-owned by several entities: the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (24% share), Salt River Project, Los Angeles Dept. of Water & Power, Arizona Public Service, Nevada Power Company and Tucson Electric Power.

A 90-day public comment period will begin upon publication of the notice in the Federal Register. During this time, EPA will hold public hearings in Arizona. For additional information on the proposal and opportunities to provide input, please go to: <http://www.epa.gov/region9/mediacenter/ngs>

The three-agency joint statement can be found at: http://www.epa.gov/air/tribal/pdfs/130103_statement_ngs.pdf

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