

# CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION DELIVERS MAJOR BLOW TO PROPOSED COAL PLANT TARGETED FOR NATION'S DIRTIEST AIR BASIN

Preliminary Staff Assessment Points to “Significant Unresolved Issues”  
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Bakersfield, CA** – Today the California Energy Commission (CEC) and U.S. Department of Energy released their much anticipated preliminary [assessment for the proposed ‘Hydrogen Energy California’ \(HECA\) coal plant](#). The 2,154 page assessment highlights “significant unresolved issues” with many aspects of the project, ranging from concerns about water supply, waste, environmental justice impacts, and the proposed but unproven carbon capture and sequestration technology. “Local farmers have been concerned that there are huge health and safety issues involved with HECA. The pollution and coal dust from the project could contaminate our food crops” said Chris Romanini, who owns and operates a farm next to the proposed site. “As farmers, we are pleased that the CEC acknowledges that there are many unresolved issues with this proposal.”

The report comes on the heels of [a Sierra Club investigation that found major problems with the local Air District’s proposed air permit for the project](#). The Sierra Club investigation uncovered illegal “emission reductions credits” that the Massachusetts-based SCS Energy purchased for the project to supposedly offset emissions. The proposed air permit failed to demonstrate HECA’s compliance with the requirements of the federal Clean Air Act, the state Clean Air Act, and the District regulations. Since the comment period on the proposed air permit and the CEC report overlapped, in this initial assessment the Energy Commission accepted the Air District’s analysis without considering public comment.

"The last thing Valley residents need is more air pollution in this area already impacted by terrible air quality and multiple pollution sources," said Bradley Angel, Executive Director of Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice. "We call on the Energy Commission to consider public comments, disregard the 30-year old offsets and to complete its own independent analysis of the dangerous air pollution that this project would add to the already overburdened valley."

The challenge by Sierra Club and now the Energy Commission's assessment of the project come amid growing local concerns for the project's potential impacts on surrounding communities and local farmland.

"I am happy the Energy Commission's staff is now taking many of these impacts seriously" said Tom Frantz, of the Association of Irrigated Residents. "This coal plant will be a source of massive new air pollution for people already suffering the huge health impacts of the worst air in the nation."

The release of the Energy Commission report raises the stakes for the future of the proposed coal plant, and kicks off a 45 day comment period, which will include a public hearing in Kern County before the comment period ends.

The coal plant would use coal railed from New Mexico and emit dangerous pollutants from transportation and gasifying the coal, including fine particulate matter and ozone precursors. Petroleum coke would be shipped from southern California refineries via soot-spewing diesel trucks that would make their way through local farmlands. The EPA has designated the county as an extreme 'non-attainment' area for ozone, the primary driver of smog. An astounding 1 in 8 children and 1 in 6 adults in the county suffer from asthma, and studies have shown a direct correlation between particulate pollution and asthma hospitalizations in the San Joaquin Valley.

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