

**For Immediate Release:** April 11, 2012

**Contact:** Jenna Garland,  [\(404\) 607-1262 x 222](tel:(404)607-1262)

## Big Cajun I Coal Plant Cancelled as Louisiana Expands Clean Energy Economy

Louisiana Positioned to Become Gulf Coast Leader for Clean Energy

New Orleans, LA - After years of legal challenges and opposition, Louisiana Generating has cancelled the Big Cajun I proposed coal plant near Baton Rouge. In a court filing, the company withdrew all permit applications for the plant and will not pursue new construction at this site. This announcement comes as utilities across the nation are abandoning new coal plant proposals as cleaner forms of generation are increasingly cost competitive and the cost of new coal generation rises. At the same time that companies are cancelling new coal plant proposals, Louisiana is leading the Gulf Coast in adopting the region's most complete set of policies to implement energy efficiency and develop home-grown clean energy, managing both the supply side and demand side of Louisiana's energy economy.

"Cancelling Big Cajun I is part of a strong national trend away from new coal and toward cleaner forms of energy," said Jordan Macha, Gulf States Representative with Sierra Club. "Louisiana has been dominated by conventional and polluting sources of energy for too long, but now our state has a real opportunity to grow the clean energy economy. Clean energy produced here in Louisiana, combined with energy efficiency, will contribute to clean, healthy air and will grow our economy for the long-term."

Sierra Club and the Louisiana Environmental Action Network (LEAN) have challenged Louisiana Generating's Big Cajun I proposal since it was first announced in 2007. Louisiana Generating currently operates natural gas-fired units at the Big Cajun I site, and had proposed converting those natural gas units to burn coal. In 2008, Sierra Club and LEAN challenged air permits issued for Big Cajun I, and Sierra Club also sued Louisiana Generating for violations of the Clean Air Act. Louisiana Generating is a state subsidiary owned by NRG.

"Coal is dirty and is notorious for causing air pollution which threatens the quality of life in our communities. The air quality in the Greater Baton Rouge area has been poor for decades and we have been making some progress in improving it; we knew we could not afford to add dirty coal emissions to our air," said Marylee Orr, Executive Director of Louisiana Environmental Action Network. "In addition, fishing lies at the heart of Louisiana culture but nearly all of the popular fishing spots in South Louisiana have fish consumption advisories because of mercury contamination that is dangerous to human health, and which comes primarily from coal fired power plants."

While Louisiana Generating was trying to keep the state tied to outdated coal power, the Louisiana Public Service Commission and state government have considered and implemented a complete set of policies to jumpstart the clean energy economy. All state facilities are required to set efficiency goals, and new state-funded construction and renovation projects have some of the most ambitious efficiency goals in the region. Additionally, the Public Service Commission launched a pilot three-year Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) in 2010, and utilities are now building the infrastructure to support renewable projects. By 2013, every utility in Louisiana will generate 3% of its electricity from renewable or clean energy sources.

"It's great to be part of a real shift in attitudes about energy in Louisiana. Finally we have citizens, utilities, and regulators realizing the long-term value and reliability of renewable energy," said Jeffrey Cantin, founder of Solar Alternatives. "With a strong and growing solar industry, Louisiana is in a catbird seat to be the regional hub for renewable energy development. The potential for growth is vast given our great natural resources and the world increasingly moving towards renewables."

Since the start of Sierra Club's Beyond Coal campaign, 168 coal plant proposals have been cancelled due to changing market conditions, legal challenges, and local opposition, and 106 coal plants have been scheduled for retirement.

###



**Sierra Club**  
85 2nd St.  
San Francisco, CA 94105  
[sierra.news@sierraclub.org](mailto:sierra.news@sierraclub.org)  
[www.sierraclub.org/pressroom](http://www.sierraclub.org/pressroom)

[Update My Profile](#) | [Unsubscribe](#) |  
[Manage My Email Preferences](#)

**Connect with the Sierra Club:**

- [Like us on Facebook](#)
- [Follow us on Twitter](#)
- [Sign up for the Insider](#)
- Join Our [Activist Network](#)

• **News Releases**

- [News Releases: Subscribe](#)
- [Currents: Bringing You the Environmental Buzz](#)
- [Contact the Media Team](#)
- [Sierra Club Leader Bios](#)
- [Sierra Club Radio](#)
- [B-roll Video Footage](#)

