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## Clean Air, National Park Advocates Challenge EPA Failure to Protect Grand Canyon from Navajo Generating Station Pollution

### *Advocates Appeal Decision that Allows Controversial Coal Plant to Keep Polluting for Decades*

GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK – Clean air and national park advocates today challenged a decision in federal court, issued by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), that allows one of the nation's oldest and dirtiest coal-fired power plants to continue polluting for decades to come.

Today, on behalf of National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), Sierra Club, Grand Canyon Trust and Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) Earthjustice filed a petition with the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals to review EPA's ruling, asking it to reconsider EPA's July decision on Navajo Generating Station (NGS).

For nearly 40 years, NGS has significantly damaged the air quality of local communities, as well as the Grand Canyon and 10 other national parks and wilderness areas across the Southwest. Yet earlier this year, EPA rejected the legal requirement to make the coal-fired power plant cut smog-forming nitrogen oxide by 85 percent over the next five years. Instead, it has approved a plan that only promises some level of cleanup sometime in the future – a plan that could let the coal plant pollute for at least another three decades. EPA contends it can water down the Clean Air Act requirements because coal plant is located on Navajo Nation lands.

"EPA's decision is unconscionable," said Kevin Dahl of the National Parks Conservation Association. "The Grand Canyon's spectacular vistas are too often shrouded by pollution from one of America's dirtiest power plants. The pollution that has plagued the region for generations should have ended with this EPA rule. Now we are left with more dirty air that mars this beautiful region and harms the millions of visitors and residents who breathe it."

"Initially, EPA made the correct decision when it required pollution controls for the Navajo Generating Station that would clean up the air of some of this nation's most beautiful and beloved parks, as well as provide numerous health benefits for surrounding communities. But the agency lost its way," said Janette Brimmer, Earthjustice staff attorney. "Now EPA has decided to avoid compliance with the requirements of the law and allow industry to delay cleaning up this dirty old plant with potentially empty and unenforceable promises. We have filed this case to steer EPA back onto the path of the law."

"Not only is the lawsuit a chance to reduce harmful emissions from a coal-fired power plant, but it provides an opportunity to promote and develop much-needed renewable energy projects," said Tony Skrelunas, Grand Canyon Trust's Native America Program Director. "We need to immediately begin pursuing a strategy for transitioning to renewable energy that will directly benefit the local communities and the tribes."

"Navajo Generating Station is one of the most polluting coal plants in the country and has fouled world-renowned Grand Canyon for far too long," said Sandy Bahr, chapter director for Sierra Club's Grand Canyon Chapter. "EPA's decision does not meet the requirements of the Clean Air Act and only delays vital clean air protections for the people of the region and our valued national parks and wilderness areas. EPA should not and cannot make special exceptions to one of nation's dirtiest polluters."

"The pollution from Navajo Generating Station is breathed in by millions across the Southwest," said Noah Long, Legal Director of the Western Energy Project with the Natural Resources Defense Council. "This pollution can get deep into the lungs and cause serious health consequences, on top of its significant environmental and haze impact. EPA shouldn't be in the business of figuring out how the Clean Air Act can avoid cleaning the air, particularly at a federally owned facility."

NGS is the largest coal-fired power plant on the Colorado Plateau and one of the ten biggest polluters in the country. It is just 12 miles from the Grand Canyon and responsible for frequently polluted air that makes vistas hazy and unhealthy at the park. The coal plant is owned jointly by the federal government and several utilities, including Salt River Project which operates it. Under the Clean Air Act, EPA must restore natural air quality in America's iconic national parks and wilderness areas.

In addition to Grand Canyon, Navajo Generating Station impacts air quality at 10 additional national parks and wilderness areas. The plant's impacts include impairing visibility for roughly four months each year at the most impacted parks. National parks in the Four Corners region attract millions of tourists and are the backbone of regional economies. According to the National Park Service, the national parks in the Four Corners region most affected by Navajo's pollution annually generate a combined total of \$1.08 billion in spending. An epidemiological analysis shows that EPA's decision to let the coal plant continue polluting for decades will cost between \$13 million and \$34 million per year in public health impacts within the state of Arizona alone.

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*Since 1919, the nonpartisan **National Parks Conservation Association** has been the leading voice of the American people in protecting and enhancing our National Park System. NPCA, its 800,000 members and supporters, and many partners work together to protect the park system and preserve our nation's natural, historical, and cultural heritage for our children and grandchildren. For more information, visit [www.npca.org](http://www.npca.org).*

***Earthjustice** uses the power of law and the strength of partnership to protect people's health; to preserve magnificent places and wildlife; to advance clean energy; and to combat climate change. For more information, visit [www.earthjustice.org](http://www.earthjustice.org).*

*The **Grand Canyon Trust** works to protect and restore the Colorado Plateau — its spectacular landscapes, flowing rivers, clean air, diversity of plants and animals, and areas of beauty and solitude. We focus on the 130,000 square mile Colorado Plateau that features 29 national parks and monuments and 26 wilderness areas — America's densest concentration of celebrated landscapes. For more information, visit [www.grandcanyontrust.org](http://www.grandcanyontrust.org).*

*The **Sierra Club** is America's largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization, with more than 2.4 million members and supporters nationwide. In addition to creating opportunities for people of all ages, levels and locations to have meaningful outdoor experiences, the Sierra Club works to safeguard the health of our communities, protect wildlife, and preserve our remaining wild places through grassroots activism, public education, lobbying, and litigation. For more information, visit [www.sierraclub.org](http://www.sierraclub.org).*

*The **Natural Resources Defense Council** combines the grassroots power of 1.4 million members and online activists with the courtroom clout and expertise of more than 350 lawyers, scientists and other professionals. We work with businesses, elected leaders, and community groups on the biggest issues we face today. For more information, visit [www.nrdc.org](http://www.nrdc.org)*