

For immediate release: Dec. 16, 2020

Contact: Miguel Escoto, Earthworks, mescoto@earthworksaction.org 202-470-6595

Antoinette Reyes, Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter, antoinette.reyes@sierraclub.org, 575-342-1727

Stephanie Dzur, Coalition for Clean, Affordable Energy, Stephanie@Dzur-Law.com

PRC, citing ETA, rejects El Paso Electric plan to expand polluting gas plant

Today, the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission unanimously denied El Paso Electric's request to build a 228-MW natural-gas generator, citing EPE's failure to consider the requirements of the Energy Transition Act.

The air quality in communities around the plant, including Chaparral, NM, and northern El Paso County, already violates federal standards for ozone and other dangerous pollutants. The additional generator would have increased those dangerous levels. While it is not clear how El Paso Electric will respond, EPE will have to decide whether it still makes sense to go forward with the project for only its Texas customers. A coalition of local groups is urging the El Paso City Council to use its legal authority to reject the plant entirely on a municipal level.

More than 1,200 New Mexicans submitted comments opposing EPE's polluting generator to the PRC. A broad community coalition, including Chaparral residents, Sunrise El Paso, neighborhood faith leaders of Interfaith Power and Light, Earthworks, Vote Solar and Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter, worked together to raise the voices of families who want clean-energy development and healthy air for their children to breathe.

"The Coalition for Clean Affordable Energy demonstrated that had El Paso Electric properly evaluated its proposed resource in light of the ETA, it could have selected a better, cheaper and greener alternative. We commend the PRC for protecting its ratepayers from higher costs and more pollution by requiring compliance with the Energy Transition Act," said **CCAEE attorney Stephanie Dzur**. CCAEE was one of the intervenors in the case.

"The NMPRC saw right through El Paso Electric's bad-faith arguments. As El Pasoans, we appreciate the Commission's decision to prioritize clean energy over dirty fossil fuels in this time of climate crisis. We hope to see the similar decisions being made by our leaders here in El Paso," said **Sunrise El Paso organizer Angel Ulloa**.

"El Paso Electric's Newman 6 fracked-gas fueled power plant proposal disregards widespread community opposition, local health impacts, and the worsening climate crisis. Hopefully the El Paso City Council will follow NMPRC's lead and act to block it as well." -- **Earthworks, West Texas Field Associate, Miguel Escoto**

"Rejecting this polluting plant would be a win for our community, especially for the colonias in southern Doña Ana County and northern El Paso County, as they are most impacted by this dirty generating station," said **Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter Southern New Mexico organizer Antoinette Reyes**.

"We need to continue to consider our communities' health and care of God's creation and climate change that affects the most vulnerable and future generations as we make decisions about energy production. New Mexico Interfaith Power and light is grateful that the Public Regulatory Commission took these ethical and moral concerns into consideration in their decision that affects our brothers and sisters in frontline communities of Chaparral and South East New Mexico," said **Sister Joan Brown, of, Executive Director New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light.**

The commission accepted hearing examiner Elizabeth Hurst's recommendation to deny EPE's request. Hurst agreed with our Coalition for Clean Affordable Energy that the plant was not in the public interest.