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Greenwire

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AIR POLLUTION: EPA lends backing to Navajo haze plan alternative *(Monday, October 21, 2013)*

Jason Plautz, E&E reporter

U.S. EPA officials are getting behind a pollution reduction plan by the operators of the largest coal-fired power plant in the West, saying it will achieve more progress than a previous federal proposal.

In July, a Technical Working Group (TWG) of Native American leaders, conservationists and owners of the 2,250-megawatt Navajo Generating Station within the Navajo Nation in Arizona proposed a plan that would shut down one coal-fired unit by 2020 and install new pollution controls on the remaining two units by 2030.

Eventually, it would end all coal power generation at the plant by 2044 (*Greenwire*, July 26).

It's one of several plans designed to reduce regional haze, which EPA says is dirtying air and reducing visibility at Grand Canyon National Park. Supporters have said that the TWG plan is even better than ones proposed by the federal government, which would have required that operators install selective catalytic reduction technology on all three of the plant's units by 2018.

In a supplemental notice set to be published in the *Federal Register*, EPA appears to concur, saying the TWG proposal "achieves greater reasonable progress than EPA's proposed [Best Available Retrofit Technology] determination towards the national visibility goal."

That plan, EPA said, would maintain nitrogen oxide emissions below a cap from 2009 to 2044 and would ensure greater emissions reductions than EPA's original proposal.

The notice also requests comments on the TWG plan and EPA's previously announced BART plan by Jan. 6, 2014, and establishes a schedule for five public hearings in Arizona on the plans, starting with one Nov. 12 in LeChee. Four more will follow in Page, Kykotsmovi Village, Phoenix and Tucson.

The notice backs up previous comments by EPA officials regarding the TWG alternative. Administrator Gina McCarthy was optimistic about the plan last month and called it a "significant step forward" (*Greenwire*, Sept. 24).

Jared Blumenfeld, EPA's regional administrator for Region 9, said in September that "these creative alternatives achieve greater emissions reductions at NGS while giving tribes and owners more flexibility."

The NGS reduction plan has proved to be one of the most controversial as EPA works to reduce haze pollution across the West. Pro-coal groups say they want to see coal burning continue on the site indefinitely (*Greenwire*, Aug. 5). And although Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly is on board with the plan, many Native Americans worry about the economic ramifications of a plant closure.

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