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Regulators Say No to More Fossil Fuel Power Generation in California

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Regulators Say No to More Fossil Fuel Power Generation in California

San Francisco – After determining that the existing electricity supply can meet the state’s system needs through the year 2020, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) voted unanimously today to defer any new procurement of fossil fuel generation. This ruling establishes for most of the state, that California’s long-term energy needs do not require building more fossil fuel infrastructure, which contributes to global warming.

The CPUC decision found there is clear evidence that “additional generation is not needed by 2020.” The decision further explains that “[w]hile the focus of this proceeding extends out to 2020, it is important to note that the record similarly does not support a finding of need for additional generation beyond 2020. Accordingly, it is also reasonable to defer procurement of generation for any estimated need after 2020.”

“Hopefully, this decision signals a turning point where the state pivots and begins to focus on building an energy system around renewable energy,” explained Will Rostov, an attorney with the public interest law firm Earthjustice that represents Sierra Club California.

Throughout the proceeding, environmental advocates emphasized the benefits of replacing power generated by burning natural gas with power from renewable sources such as wind and solar, which do not produce greenhouse gases and other pollution.

“California needs to move away from its reliance on fossil fuel, which affects poor communities that are most affected by pollution. This decision is a step in that right direction,” said Deborah Behles of Golden Gate University’s Environmental Law and Justice Clinic, which represents Pacific Environment.

“This is a real opportunity to bring about a just energy system,” said Shana Lazerow, an attorney with Communities for a Better Environment, a party to the proceeding. “This ruling should mean our communities can focus on green jobs that come with building local, sustainable generation, and not have to fend off proposals for new, dirty plants.”

The Commission ordered a new analysis of the state’s long-term energy needs, with an emphasis on meeting the goal of generating one third of the electrical supply from

renewable sources and by prioritizing energy efficiency and demand response, resources that lower demand. State law requires that 33 percent of California's electricity must come from renewables by the year 2020.

“What this decision is really about is our society saying no to dirty fossil fuels, and yes to clean energy,” said Alex Levinson, Executive Director of Pacific Environment. “The decision affirms California's critical leadership in building the clean energy economy of the future.”

“This order is a solid step toward an energy plan for California that considers the needs of not only the consumers but also the environment,” said Jim Metropulos, Senior Advocate with Sierra Club California. “We will continue to work with the Commission to create a future supply of power that doesn't deplete our natural resources or pollute our air and water.”

The decision comes as part of the CPUC's 2010 Long-Term Procurement Plan proceeding that evaluated the state's energy needs into the next decade. A January 2012 decision in the same proceeding emphasized that California's utilities need to first employ energy efficiency and conservation to meet customer demand; then energy from renewable sources such as wind, solar and geothermal. Only after all those supplies are exhausted may the utilities purchase power from fossil fuel plants.

The entire CPUC order is available at:

http://docs.cpuc.ca.gov/PUBLISHED/AGENDA_DECISION/164031.htm

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