

November 18, 2009

Re: Powering Past Coal in Colorado, Xcel's Cherokee Coal-fired Power Plant

Dear Governor Ritter:

We, the undersigned organizations, businesses, scientists and community leaders urge you to ensure Colorado succeeds in meeting its climate action goals to safeguard public health, the environment, and our economic prosperity. **We urge you to take bold action to confront the cost of burning coal in Colorado, specifically the cost of Xcel Energy's Cherokee coal-fired power plant, located in North Denver.**

Global warming is this generation's greatest environmental challenge. Fueled by excessive greenhouse gas emissions, global warming threatens our agriculture, our water supplies, the vitality of our forests, our ski and tourism industry, our clean air, and the health of our communities. To protect Colorado, in 2008 you called for a 20% reduction greenhouse gases below 2005 levels by 2020 and an 80% reduction by 2050.

Coal-fired power plants are the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Colorado, making Xcel's coal-fired power plants the key to meeting our climate action goals. The company is the state's largest utility and operates seven coal-fired plants in the state that every year release more than 22,000,000 tons of heat-trapping carbon dioxide—more than 17% of the state's total greenhouse gases. This makes the company responsible for more greenhouse gas emissions than any other single source.

The 717 megawatt Cherokee plant is more than 50 years old and is currently Xcel's largest coal-fired power plant. Every year the power plant releases more than 100 pounds of mercury, thousands of tons of smog forming gases, and more than 5,000,000 tons of carbon dioxide. The plant also releases large amounts of sulfur dioxide and smog forming nitrogen oxides, which are linked to respiratory ailments. It is very likely the plant will be required to make significant and costly upgrades to meet federal air quality standards limiting smog and sulfur dioxide.

Worse, the plant is located in heart of Denver's urban core, posing major public health and environmental justice concerns, especially for those living in the North Denver neighborhoods of Globeville, Elyria, and Swansea.

To effectively reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Colorado and meet our climate action goals, we must chart a sensible path toward retiring Xcel's coal-fired power plants, including the Cherokee plant. With clean energy solutions on hand, there is no reason we cannot make this a reality.

Xcel itself has shown that it is possible to power past coal and embrace a clean energy future. The company has proposed to retire its two smallest coal-fired power plants and is considered to be a leading provider of renewable energy. Xcel is on track to meet Colorado's 20% renewable energy standard ahead of schedule. And more recently, in response to a request for proposals, Xcel received bids to develop 15,000 megawatts of renewable energy in Colorado. This is more than two times the company's peak generating capacity of 7,000 megawatts, more than enough

to offset all the company's coal-fired power plants.

Despite this progress and potential, Xcel's greenhouse gas emissions are actually projected to increase.

Later this year, the company intends to start up its new coal-fired boiler in Pueblo. Even after Xcel retires its two smallest coal-fired power plants, the company's carbon dioxide emissions will actually increase by more than 3,000,000 tons annually after this boiler starts up.

The benefits of powering past coal and toward clean energy solutions extend far beyond greenhouse gases. In Colorado, retiring Xcel's coal-fired power plants would:

- Eliminate 25% of the state's toxic air pollution, including 45% of all mercury emissions and 25% of all dioxins;
- Remove from our air 52% of the state's sulfur dioxide, a potent haze forming gas, and 12% of the state's nitrogen oxides, which are in part responsible for creating smog;
- Conserve more than 9.3 billion gallons of water annually; and
- Keep more than 974,000 tons of toxic coal ash waste from being disposed of.

Retiring the Cherokee coal-fired power plant alone will represent a significant step forward in safeguarding public health, clean air, and the climate. Importantly, it will make significant progress toward ensuring compliance with federal air quality standards.

The promise of a New Energy Economy, one that relies on clean, renewable energy, that ambitiously confronts the costs of burning coal, and that fully meets our climate actions goals, is at hand. However, we need your continued leadership to make this a reality.

We urge you to commit to powering Colorado past coal. We urge you to work with Xcel Energy to retire existing coal-fired power plants, starting with the Cherokee coal-fired power plant, and to aggressively develop renewable energy to meet our climate action goals. Our economy, our health, and our environment are depending on your leadership.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



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