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Environment Secretary Issues Statement on Dine Power Authority and Desert Rock Energy Co. Lawsuit of EPA over Desert Rock Power Plant

(Santa Fe, NM) – New Mexico Environment Secretary Ron Curry issued the following statement today on Dine Power Authority's and Desert Rock Energy Co., LLC's lawsuit against the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regarding the coal-fired Desert Rock power plant air permit, which EPA has jurisdiction over. The lawsuit contends EPA failed to make a timely decision on the permit for the proposed plant.

"New Mexico's position on this plant is clear; the Desert Rock plant as currently proposed is a step in the wrong direction," Secretary Curry said. "We need to be moving forward, toward new carbon capture ready technologies for power generation, not back to the old dirty coal plants of the past.

As planned, this new facility will adversely impact air quality, exacerbate existing environment problems, and negatively impact scarce surface and ground water resources. Also, the technology as proposed by Sithe refuses to consider real technological advances. It appears Sithe's investment in plant planning is outdated without taking into account the needs of climate change policy.

The estimated 12 million tons of carbon dioxide emitted each year from the Desert Rock Energy Facility would increase New Mexico greenhouse gas emissions by about 15 percent, making Governor's Richardson's aggressive greenhouse gas reduction goals difficult – if not impossible – to meet.

This lawsuit is unfortunate and premature. At the request of the Navajo Nation, New Mexico Environment Department staff has been meeting with tribal environmental officials to discuss this project and the potential for carbon emission reductions. To sue now undercuts these ongoing discussions. We respect the sovereignty of the Navajo Nation and the rights of tribal governments to determine their economic futures and to pursue positive change within their communities. However, the responsibility of taking strong action to combat global climate change is one we must all share."

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