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## Grassroots group says power plant a gamble

*Dakota Resource Council says S.D. power plant a bad idea For N.D. ratepayers*

**Bismarck---**Dakota Resource Council says “no” to MDU and Otter Tail Power’s request for a “blessing” from the North Dakota Public Service Commission on their proposed Big Stone II power plant near Milbank, SD.

Dakota Resource Council (DRC) last Thursday formally intervened in the process, called “predetermination of prudence.” If North Dakota Public Service Commissioners approve the project, the companies will be better able to obtain funding for construction and in addition, could raise North Dakota customers’ utility rates to cover costs.

The proposed project made news last year when the estimated cost of construction increased by half.

MDU and Otter Tail Power partnered with five other utilities to develop the traditional coal-fired power plant. Critics say the project has ignored the inevitable emissions constraints--on CO2 and other global warming gases—that coal plants will face as nations attempt to mitigate global warming. Backers of the project have not addressed the additional costs of burning coal.

There are other options for meeting the region’s electric needs, including locally generated power from wind; North Dakota has the greatest potential for wind power in the country. “The 50 year life expectancy of a new coal plant would lock ratepayers into very unpredictable costs to offset the millions of tons of heat-trapping gases it emits,” said Marie Hoff, Bismarck, a member of DRC’s Clean Energy Committee.

“Another risk is a federal mandate to retrofit global warming pollution technology,” adds Hoff. “In this event, ratepayers could be forced to pay for the lack of vision exercised by the investors.”

The group says that the proposed plant is a bad idea because it does not capture carbon dioxide, because wind energy is less expensive and because ratepayers in North Dakota will be subsidizing the plant but will see little if any benefits from its construction.

“These utilities need to look at other viable options to meet their energy needs,” said Hoff. “Options, such as clean, reliable and readily available wind energy generated in North Dakota, may actually cost less and provide more local economic benefits. DRC calls on the PSC to exercise foresight, look at the options, think through the implications of building an outmoded coal plant and put North Dakota in a strong position for the future.”

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