

Michigan Beyond Coal Campaign Timeline

In January 2007 the Holland Board of Public Works submitted the first of five applications for air pollution permits for coal plants submitted to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality that year. By the end of 2007, Michigan became the state with the most proposed new or expanding coal plant permit applications in the country.

Today, the efforts of the broad Clean Energy Now (CEN) coalition working to move Michigan beyond coal has led to a dramatic turn around: two coal plant air permit applications have been withdrawn; Public Service Commission staff reports say the power from two additional coal plants is not needed; and the final utility is being challenged in court for failing to comply with environmental laws at its existing plant.

The Department of Environmental Quality will decide soon whether permits should be granted to the Wolverine Power Supply Cooperative's proposed Rogers City plant, the Consumers Energy Karn Weadock plant expansion proposal, or to the Holland BPW expansion proposal. As a result of top notch, detailed technical and legal analysis from CEN members, DEQ has in hand compelling documentation of the environmental harm these plants pose, as well as that energy efficiency and renewables will be much cleaner and will better meet the needs of electric customers and Michigan's economy.

However, the utilities are ratcheting up their wrong-headed quest to build these dirty, expensive and outdated plants. A pro-coal rally at the capitol in that the coal plant proponents have key legislators on their side even though the coal plants will hurt Michigan families, workers and economic recovery. Worries about finding jobs have been used by utilities to mislead workers into supporting the coal plants.

In less than three years Michigan has made great strides toward implementing a clean energy economy and moving beyond coal. Below is the timeline highlighting key event during this campaign to Move Michigan Beyond Coal - Please join us in this effort!

January 2007 – Holland Board of Public Works applies to Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) for air pollution permit to expand James DeYoung power plant

February 2007 – Northern Michigan University submits air permit application to MDEQ for building a coal and wood fired co-generation expansion of the natural gas and oil fired Ripley Heating plant

April 2007 – US Supreme Court declares carbon dioxide (CO₂) an air pollutant in Massachusetts v. EPA

Spring 2007 – Michigan Chapter begins campaign in concert with Sierra Club Beyond Coal campaign to stop the then five new or expanding coal plant proposals in Michigan

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June 2007 – MidMichigan Energy (LS Power/Dynegy) submits air pollution permit application to MDEQ for proposed coal plant in Midland

August 2007 – Citizens for Environmental Inquiry in Rogers City area submits request to DEQ Director Steve Chester requesting he initiate steps to regulate CO2

September 2007 – Wolverine Power Supply Cooperative submits air pollution permit application to MDEQ for proposed coal and biomass plant in Rogers City

October 2007 – Thirteen environmental and community organizations file a request to MDEQ to “Issue a Declaratory Ruling Regarding the Applicability of the Michigan Environmental Protection Act to Emissions of Carbon Dioxide from Coal-Fired Electric-Generating Plants”

October 2007 – Consumers Energy submits air pollution permit to MDEQ for proposed expansion of the Karn Weadock coal fired power plant in Essexville

Autumn 2007 – Clean Energy Now coalition created

November 2007 – MDEQ holds hearing on NMU Ripley Plant air permit in Marquette following request of Sierra Club, with participation by students from NMU and Sierra Club Central UP Group

Spring & Summer 2008 – Petition to the Governor asking her to regulate CO2 circulated throughout Michigan and on line

Spring 2008 – Lansing Board of Water and Light announces plans to build coal and biomass plant in Delta Township to expand and partially replace existing plant in Lansing

May 2008 – MDEQ issues NMU air pollution permit. Sierra Club files appeal to US EPA Environmental Appeals Board based on issues including failure to address best available control of greenhouse gases

June 25, 2008 – MDEQ holds briefing session in Lansing to explain their procedures for handling the four outstanding air pollution permit applications for coal fired power plants. A website for tracking coal plant permits is created (<http://www.deq.state.mi.us/aps/downloads/permits/cfpp/cfpp.htm>) and commitment is made to provide 60 day comment periods with three hearings at least for each facility.

September 2008 – Citizen Groups send letter to DEQ Director Steve Chester regarding “feasible and prudent alternatives” requirements of Michigan Environmental Protection Act and federal Clean Air Act.

September 2008 to January 2009 – Public comment period on Wolverine Power Supply Cooperative proposed power plant. Hearings in Rogers City October 29 & 30

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November 2008 to January 2009 – Public comment period on Holland Board of Public Works proposed expansion of James DeYoung coal fired power plant. Hearings held in Holland on January 12 and 13, 2009.

December 3, 2008 – Citizen Groups send letter to Governor Granholm regarding “Michigan’s Legal Duty and Authority to Regulate Greenhouse Gas Emissions From Proposed Coal-Fired Power Plants”

January 6, 2009 – Press conference in Lansing among diverse coalition opposing coal plant proposals in Michigan, including environmental organizations, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe, and community groups call for DEQ to deny permits.

February 4, 2009 – Governor Jennifer Granholm announces in State of the State the goal of reducing state’s dependence on fossil fuels for electric generation by 45% by 2020. Governor signs Executive Directive 2009-2 directing DEQ, with Public Service Commission assistance, to require feasible and prudent alternatives analyses and demonstration of need for the electricity to be generated. Granholm directive is first in nation to use provision of Clean Air Act requiring alternatives consideration.

February 2009 – Two Michigan State Representatives ask MI Attorney General for opinion on Governor’s Executive Directive 2009-2. AG issues flawed opinion that Governor does not have authority to direct her agencies to require alternatives analysis, but confirms that MDEQ Director Chester does have that authority.

February 18, 2009 – EPA’s Environmental Appeals Board remands Northern Michigan University permit to MDEQ based on flaws, including failure to require submission of best available control technology assessment regarding control of green house gases CO₂ and N₂O

March – May 2009 – Comment period on Consumers Energy Karn Weadock plant permit application. Hearings on April 14 hearing saw drunk and disorderly permit supporters harass opponents, while April 15 hearings dominated by well-spoken opponents.

June – August 2009 – Consumers Energy and Wolverine Power submit to MDEQ and Public Service Commission staff Electric Generation Alternatives Analysis (EGAAs) as directed by Governor Granholm and MDEQ Director Steve Chester. Public comment periods are held, no hearings held

April 2009 – USEPA proposed endangerment finding regarding greenhouse gases

May 1, 2009 – LS Power announces cancellation of MidMichigan Energy plant

May 7, 2009 – Northern Michigan University asks DEQ to void permit for coal fired power plant, deciding to pursue wood only plant instead.

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September 2009 – Public Service Commission releases reports prepared for MDEQ on both Wolverine Power and Consumers Energy EGAs, finding that there is no need before 2022 for the Consumers Energy plant proposal without retirement of existing plants and that alternatives can meet the need, and that there is no need for Wolverine Power plant at all.

September 2009 – USEPA announced it will proceed with developing regulations for greenhouse gases, with goal of implementing rules in 2011.

October 2009 – MDEQ issues new mercury rules for coal plants, setting in motion requirements for upgrades for existing and proposed coal plants in the state.