

Crowd Gathers Near Green River to Protest Nuke Plant Plan

Utah and Downriver Communities Host Successful Protest--Vow to Escalate Campaign

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Alfredo Figueroa, Chemehuevi Indian from Blythe, CA 760-922-6422

GREEN RIVER, Utah, May 21, 2012 – The desert near Green River came alive Saturday evening as more than 100 people – bearing giant puppets, colorful costumes and a solar-powered sound system – gathered to protest a nuclear power plant proposed nearby.

Indigenous people from near the lower Colorado River traveled over 600 miles to attend the event and stand in solidarity with protestors from Utah and beyond. The Fort Mojave Indian Tribe, which sent an official delegation all the way from their reservation in Needles, California, had previously defeated a proposed nuclear waste dump near their lands. They reported fears that a nuclear reactor in Green River could dewater and contaminate the Colorado River that is the heart of their lands, people and culture.

“The Colorado River is the lifeline of all the tribes and all the people,” said Alfredo Figueroa, a Chemehuevi Indian and resident of Blythe, California. The Green River is the largest tributary of the Colorado.

Ron Van Fleet of the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe addressed what he referred to as the rally’s “warrior society” and urged those present to build a resistance, especially for future generations.

“I have 32 grandchildren. I wouldn’t give any of them up to nuclear waste.” He continued, “They [nuclear plant proponents] say they have millions of dollars to do this project, but you know what they don’t have? They don’t have heart.”

Protestors held signs reading, “You Lie, We Die,” “Glow to Hell” and “People Over Profits.” Mr. Burns, a fictional power plant owner from the popular TV show “The Simpsons,” presided over the event in puppet form while a pink dragon – which Figueroa referred to as the Plumed Serpent, an important Aztec god – snaked through the crowd. Victor Van Fleet sang several traditional Mojave “Bird Songs” that tell stories of the Colorado River river and the tribe’s culture. Attendants from a nearby arts festival brought a massive solar-powered speaker set, playing river songs over the crowd.

Blue Castle Holdings, a Utah-based company with former state representative Aaron Tilton at its helm, hopes to build two 1500-megawatt reactors on the outskirts of the town of Green River. Earlier this year, the company was granted water rights for the project by the state engineer. Now, it is in the process of

obtaining an Early Site Permit from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Those protesting this project are motivated by a number of concerns.

“We’re here to show this is not the place,” said Craig Cain, a protest attendee dressed in a gas mask and HAZMAT suit. “This is a desert, and nuclear reactors are water-hungry things.”

The plant would divert nearly 48 million gallons of water a day from the Green River, a waterway recently named the second-most endangered river in the nation in a report by American Rivers. Such a withdrawal, according to the No Green River Nuke Coalition, could have deleterious effects on native fish and a local tourism industry dependent on river running. A broad coalition of groups, business and individuals opposed to the reactor project has filed a suit in Utah District Court seeking to have the water rights decision overturned.

“Forget politics--the wise use of scarce desert water is important to everyone,” said protest organizer Laurel Hagen. “Even for those who support nuclear power, we should all demand that any company planning to build nuclear reactors has the experience and ability to do it.”

Blue Castle Holdings made headlines earlier this year when it was learned that the Securities and Exchange Commission had charged the company’s only named investor, LeadDog Capital, with fraud and illegal practices. The company has announced no further financial investors or utility commitments. The estimated cost of the plant is \$13 to \$16 billion.

Ken Sleight, Moab’s iconic boatman, horseman and friend of Ed Abbey, told the crowd, “This is never going to be but, by God, we’re going to have to fight for it.”

Steve Lopez, spokesman for the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe, reiterated Sleight’s comments.

“It took us a long time to stop the nuclear waste project where we are at, but all we have is time. Be prepared for a battle. Our long-term objective is to win the war.”

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