



**WESTERN RESOURCE**  
ADVOCATES

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## **Kansas' rejection of Tri-State power plant a huge step forward** *Decision will protect climate, benefit clean energy and save ratepayers money*

Today's denial by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment of a proposal to build two new coal-fired power plants in western Kansas will protect the climate, benefit efforts to boost local clean energy resources and, in the long run, save ratepayers significant money.

Westminster, Colo.-based Tri-State Generation and Transmission had proposed building a new 700-megawatt coal-fired plant near Holcomb, Kan., in partnership with Sunflower Electric, which also planned to build its own 700-megawatt plant. All the electricity generated by the Tri-State unit would have been shipped west from Kansas to serve Tri-State customers in Colorado, New Mexico and Wyoming.

"This courageous decision is a huge gust of fresh air, and Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius and the staff at state environment department should be applauded for their vision," said Matt Baker, the executive director of Environment Colorado. "This is going to have lasting rewards for the region's air, water, economy and climate."

In denying the air permit, KDHE director Rod Bremby said in a written statement that it was his "responsibility to protect the public health and environment from actual, threatened or potential harm from air pollution."

Bremby said "it would be irresponsible to ignore emerging information about the contribution of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases to climate change and the potential harm to our environment and health if we do nothing."

Earlier this year, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concluded that scientific evidence unequivocally points to a warming planet, and it said that humans are the cause for most of the observed climate changes. For people living in the West, the potential threats of global warming are particularly alarming, from decreased snowpack and more severe droughts, to more intense wildfires and the many public health problems associated with extreme summer heat.

Tri-State's long-term commitment to new coal-fired power also posed huge financial risks for its ratepayers, for reasons ranging from rapidly escalating construction costs to the hundreds of

millions of dollars in additional operating costs each year that would have been necessary to control global warming pollution from the plant.

Plans for 16 other coal-fired power plants around the country have been cancelled recently. In Florida, for example, plans for three new plants have been killed, one by utility regulators, the other two by the utilities, largely because of concerns about global warming and the associated costs of controlling carbon emissions. And in Oklahoma, utilities scrapped their plans for a nearly \$2 billion coal-fired power plant after the state's Public Corporation Commission refused to allow them to recover costs from ratepayers. The commissioners said the utilities failed to consider reasonable alternatives such as efficiency and wind that would benefit Oklahoma consumers.

Conventional coal-fired power plants emit around 2 pounds of carbon dioxide for every kilowatt-hour of electricity they generate, meaning the proposed Tri-State and Sunflower units would have emitted more than 11 million tons of global warming pollution annually. Recent estimates for emissions pricing range from \$10 to \$40 a ton by 2020, meaning that Tri-State would have had to pay hundreds of millions of dollars a year in extra operating costs and billions over the plant's lifespan.

"Kansas' denial of Tri-State's plant is emblematic of growing disillusionment with coal as an energy source," said John Nielsen, the energy policy director at Western Resource Advocates. "It's going to save Tri-State's ratepayers from having to shoulder the burden for dramatic rate increases that would have been necessary to pay for the Kansas plant. And hopefully it encourages Tri-State to focus on the huge opportunities for energy efficiency and for developing renewable energy sources like wind and solar power, especially in rural parts of its service area."

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