



WESTERN RESOURCE ADVOCATES

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
December 17, 2004

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Conservation Groups Applaud Public Utilities Commission Approval of Environmental Agreement

Cleaner Air for Pueblo and Colorado

(Denver, CO) Today (Friday, December 17, 2004), the Colorado Public Utilities Commission approved a comprehensive environmental agreement that Xcel Energy and national and regional conservation groups and Pueblo stakeholders negotiated over the course of several months. John Nielsen, Energy Program Director for Western Resource Advocates, said “this is good news for Pueblo’s citizens who will breathe cleaner air, and all of Colorado, which will see cleaner, cheaper energy.” He continued, “a number of conservation groups worked painstakingly with Xcel and citizens from Pueblo to find a balanced, common-sense settlement to what otherwise would have been a contentious dispute; we are very pleased the PUC approved the agreement.”

With today’s ruling, Xcel Energy will clean up two existing units at its existing Comanche Plant in Pueblo and install state-of-the-art pollution controls on the new unit. Xcel will also undertake innovative new programs to reduce pollution that affects Pueblo school children, and to reduce mercury pollution from industrial sources in the area.

“Some of the best news for Colorado’s long-term energy security is that Xcel is committing to significantly increase its investments in both renewable energy sources and energy efficiency,” said Eric Guidry, legal counsel at WRA. “Over the long term, this means Coloradans will have cleaner, cheaper energy,” he continued.

Perhaps the most precedent-setting provision in the settlement agreement is one that commits Xcel to consider the long-term financial risks of global warming regulation. “This agreement responds to existing environmental issues while also starting the process of considering how we plan for and respond to the growing problem of global warming,” said Vickie Patton of Environmental Defense’s Rocky Mountain Office.

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Advancing Solutions for the Western Environment

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Following today's hearing, the PUC will issue a final written order early in 2005. Then the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's Air Pollution Control Division will consider a permit for the new unit at Comanche Power Plant. Current plans are for construction to begin in 2005 and for the plant to begin operating in 2009.

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