

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **ARIZONA ON TRACK TO BECOME “ENERGY FARM” FOR CALIFORNIA** *Corporation Commission Asked to Perform Statewide Assessment*

Questioning if Arizona should become an “energy farm” for California, and citing air quality and water use concerns, the Grand Canyon Trust, Arizona Center for Law in the Public Interest, Land and Water Fund of the Rockies, Sierra Club- Grand Canyon Chapter, and others filed an application today with the Arizona Corporation Commission, requesting that the Commission conduct a statewide assessment of Arizona’s electric utility industry.

“Arizona is currently being buried under a tidal wave of new power plant applications,” said Rick Moore, Program Officer with the Grand Canyon Trust. Over the past two years, at least 20 new plants have been proposed for Arizona, with a combined capacity of more than 17,000 megawatts (one megawatt is enough to power 500 to 1,000 homes). “If all of these plants are approved, we will be producing more than *double* our current generation of electricity. This goes well beyond Arizona’s projected future needs.”

“Approving all of the plants will result in enormous impacts to the air quality and water resources of Arizona,” said Sandy Bahr, Director of the Grand Canyon chapter of the Sierra Club. “We are concerned that we are sacrificing Arizona’s scenic vistas, clean air, and scarce water resources to power air conditioners in Los Angeles.”

“It is the Commission's legal responsibility to protect the public interest by balancing the need for power with the protection of the environment and ecology of the state,” stated Eric Guidry, Staff Attorney with the Energy Project of the Land and Water Fund of the Rockies. “A statewide assessment would provide the Commission with the information necessary to meet their responsibility. It would also provide a forum for understanding the roles that energy efficiency, conservation, and renewable resources can play in meeting Arizona's power needs.”

Prior to the restructuring of the electric utility industry in Arizona, the Commission periodically assessed the status of the state’s electricity supply and its power needs through a resource planning process. Mr. Guidry adds, “The Commission suspended that process back in August 1997 because it concluded that the old process had been rendered obsolete by electric utility restructuring, but it never substituted anything in its place. A statewide assessment of the utility industry is long overdue.”

Most of the proposed power plants are “merchant plants,” which sell power on the open market to the highest bidder. Given California’s current energy situation, most of this electricity will likely be sold in that state. This scenario leaves Arizonans to deal with the direct impacts of the power plants on their environment and economy, while California enjoys most of the benefits.

“No one is minding the store as all of these power plants are being approved,” said Tim Hogan, Director of Arizona Center for Law in the Public Interest. “No one has looked at the

cumulative impacts of the addition of this many plants, including the impacts on the state's air quality, transmission infrastructure and water supply.”

The complete list of groups who submitted the statewide energy assessment application includes: Grand Canyon Trust, Arizona Center for Law in the Public Interest, Sierra Club--Grand Canyon Chapter, Land and Water Fund of the Rockies, Arizona Consumers Council, White Tanks Concerned Citizens, Inc., Friends of the Ironwood Forest National Monument, Sky Island Alliance, Tucson Audubon Society, ETA Engineering Inc., Tonopah Area Coalition, Friends of the Sonoran Desert National Monument, and Don't Waste Arizona.

For copies of the application and cover letter, visit [www.lawfund.org/pressrelease.htm](http://www.lawfund.org/pressrelease.htm).

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