

Clean Energy: A Sure Bet

We know that coal is a bad bet for Nevada. It's dirty, expensive, harmful to our health, and only exacerbates global warming. That's why it makes no sense to continue building coal plants in Nevada, when we can instead put our resources and energy into clean, renewable energy. Renewable energy costs less to create, creates twice as many jobs as coal, uses a fraction of the water, and won't ship our resources out of state.

Economic studies by the California Energy Commission and the National Renewable Energy Laboratory have documented several thousand megawatts of economically viable renewable energy in northwest Nevada. The development of these clean energy sources would provide hundreds of long-term jobs and millions of dollars in local tax revenue.

However, construction of coal plants would block the development of these renewable resources by taking up all the unused transmission capacity on the existing transmission lines. For every megawatt of power coal plants would generate and ship out of state via existing main power lines, one megawatt less of clean Nevada geothermal and wind power could be developed and shipped on the same line. This is because transmission lines' capacity is limited. For example, one main power line that runs through Gerlach can currently handle just another 1,000-2,000 megawatts of power, or the output of just one coal plant.

Building new lines to transport renewable energy to western markets would be prohibitively expensive. Therefore, by reserving the transmission line for solar, geothermal and wind resources, Nevada can develop clean, indigenous Nevada resources for the benefit of the state as well as export most of the power to markets that are desperately seeking renewable power. Many private utilities, such as those in California, are required to power from clean renewable sources like solar, wind and geothermal. Nevada can either use its renewable assets for the benefit of its citizens or let coal despoil our air and water to enhance the profits of coal's stockholders.

Never before has the cost of producing solar, geothermal and wind energy matched that of a traditional pulverized coal-fired plant, but it does. And renewable energy won't ruin our air and water. However, even with the use of state-of-the-art technology, conventional so-called "clean" coal plants release more than 50 hazardous air pollutants into our air and water.

A typical coal plant costs roughly \$2 billion to build and irreparably harms our land, people, water and air. Clean, renewable energy development in Northern Nevada would cost roughly the same, produce the same amount of electricity and secure a clean, safe environment for all. Isn't it time to consider the alternatives?

Real Clean Energy or So-called "Clean" Coal – No Contest

Coal companies claim coal plants create new jobs, but a recent report from the University of California shows that, compared to coal and other fossil fuels, renewable energy plants generate more jobs per megawatt of power installed, per unit of energy produced and per dollar of investment.

Coal companies also claim Nevada would benefit from higher property tax revenue from the further development of coal. But the nature of a coal plant is that most of the investment goes to buying coal for fuel, which is not subject to property taxes. Developers of renewable energy don't need to buy fuel, and instead invest the vast majority of their money in capital equipment, which means they're a far more powerful engine to produce jobs and local tax revenue.

Solar

With a sunny climate, and hundreds of thousands of un-used federally managed land, Nevada is ideal for solar energy. And, solar comes at a very low financial and environmental cost; at under 12 cents a kilowatt hour, solar has zero global-warming pollution. Solar is sustainable, too. While the

price and demand of coal will only continue to rise, we can always count on the sun to be free — and abundant.

Wind

Renewable development would rely heavily on the power of wind at a dozen sites. Imagine a wind farm with turbines with large flat blades spinning slowly in the breeze, producing power that is cost-competitive with coal — without harming our air or using scarce water resources.

Geothermal

While there are no coal resources in Nevada, there is a vast reservoir of untapped geothermal energy. Currently there are over 200 megawatts of geothermal power being produced in Northern Nevada using wells to draw 300-degree water from underground to create steam and spin turbines. Once it cools, the geothermal water is returned to the earth to reheat.

The California Energy Commission has estimated in an independent study that there are over 800 megawatts worth of geothermal potential in Northern Nevada that could be economically developed today. And the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) estimates there may be thousands of megawatts more that are yet to be fully explored.

The Bottom Line

As In Business Las Vegas reported in 2008, “the battle lines are already drawn and 2008 will likely see a showdown between renewable energy advocates and defenders of the use of fossil fuels. Thus far, the renewable energy advocates appear to have the upper hand.”

Nevadans are speaking up: they want clean, renewable energy

instead of dirty coal, because it's a sure bet for our economy, environment, and health.