

November 17, 2004
For Immediate Release

Proposed Coal Plant Expensive and Polluting *Cleaner alternatives urged by Community*

Contacts:

Smart Growth San Antonio – Marianne Kestenbaum 210-364-6838

Chris Brown Consulting - Chris Brown 210- 822-3500

Public Citizen – Tom “Smitty” Smith 512-477-1155

SEED Coalition – Karen Hadden 512-797-8481

Member of the Executive Committee of the Alamo Group of the Sierra Club – Loyd Cortez 210-674-9489

San Antonio – Citizens are urging City Public Service (CPS) to reconsider its proposal to build a new coal-burning power plant in San Antonio and to pursue renewable energy and energy efficiency instead. The draft permit for a new 750 MW coal plant is now being made available and a public meeting will be held on Dec. 16th in San Antonio.

“Global warming puts San Antonio at risk, since it can lead to drought, followed by torrential rains, similar to what occurred in the area in the late 90’s. Water quality and quantity is already of vital concern here and global warming increases evaporation. The unnecessary proposed coal plant would emit 6 million tons more carbon dioxide the major global warming gas,” said Chris Brown. “Citizens can and should ask their elected leaders to take action now to minimize emissions that cause global warming by not building another coal-burning power plant, and pursuing cleaner, more affordable options instead.”

A National Assessment of Climate Change predicts the San Antonio Edwards Aquifer region will suffer reduced spring flows, less irrigation, and a regional welfare loss of \$2.2-\$6.8 million per year due to global warming. Spring flows at Comal springs are predicted to decrease by 10-16% by 2030 and 20-24% by 2090. Floods are expected to increase in frequency and severity, In October 1998, San Antonio was subjected to 11 inches of rainfall in one day – twice as much as the city had ever before received in one day. The flood of 1998 killed 31 residents of the San Antonio region and caused over \$750 million in property damages.

“The proposed new coal plant would emit significant amounts of mercury pollution to the air,” stated Karen Hadden, Director of the Sustainable Energy and Economic Development (SEED) Coalition. “Mercury leads to fish contamination and puts our children at risk for brain damage and learning disabilities. We’re glad that CPS has agreed to meet the coming federal standards, but the truth is that no additional mercury is acceptable. The plants at Calaveras Lake already rank 30th in the nation for mercury – out

of 476 coal plants – putting them in the Dirty Thirty category. They should be reducing overall mercury by 90%, not adding to the toxic pollution.”

"Our membership just has a simple statement to make. We don't want mercury in our air. We don't want mercury in our water. We don't want mercury in our fish. We don't want mercury in our children's bodies. For this reason, we don't want another CPS coal power plant to be built, that will produce more of this toxic mercury, to poison our environment," said Loyd Cortez, a member of the Executive Committee of the Alamo Group of the Sierra Club.

“We could avoid building a new 750 MW plant by using energy efficiency alone, or by combining with new renewable energy sources. Texas leads the nation in potential for renewable energy, such as wind and solar power, and biomass. These sources of energy don’t have ongoing fuel costs, like coal does, and won’t pollute our air and threaten our health,” said Marianne Kestenbaum, Director of Smart Growth San Antonio.

“Energy efficiency can be used to reduce the amount of energy needed in San Antonio,” stated Kestenbaum.” Checking homes and businesses for leaking ducts, adding insulation and more efficient heating and air conditioning systems can reduce energy use dramatically. People can be more comfortable, use less energy and pay lower utility bills all at the same time. This has already been done successfully in Austin, where the city didn’t have to build a 500 MW coal plant because many citizens chose to take advantage of the city’s energy audit and rebate programs. San Antonio is a larger city, and there is more ground to gain here.”

“Studies have shown that energy efficiency is lower cost alternative than new plants in many cities- and we expect that the ongoing study of San Antonio’s efficiency potential will show that CPS doesn’t need to build this plant at all, but they do need to improve their efficiency programs, “ stated Tom “Smitty” Smith, Director of Public Citizen’s Texas office.

“If we were to take the billion dollars this plant will cost to build and invest it in energy efficiency instead, the utility could invest about \$2,000 per home in San Antonio on updated air conditioners, insulation and weather stripping. Consumers would save money, the air would be cleaner, and the climate cooler,” concluded Marianne Kestenbaum.

Citizens can still file a request for a contested case hearing and can submit comments on the permit to TCEQ. A public meeting about the proposed permit has been scheduled for December 16, at 7 PM at East Central High School cafeteria, 7173 FM 1628 in San Antonio, 78263. It will include a question and answer session where the public can provide comment and ask questions.

Web sites: www.smartgrowthsa.org, www.seedcoalition.org

###