

Nevada Power Plant to Close After Dispute

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LAUGHLIN, Nev. -- A large coal-fired power plant at the center of a dispute several years ago will close at the end of the year rather than violate a court-ordered deadline to install an estimated \$1.1 billion in pollution-control measures.

Southern California Edison said Thursday the Mohave Generating Station near Laughlin would close. The plant has provided the utility with 7 percent of its electricity, but the company said its 13 million customers would not be immediately affected because of other power sources.

Under a 1999 consent decree won by environmental groups, the aging Mohave plant was required to upgrade its pollution controls or close by Jan. 1, 2006.

The groups had argued the 1,580-megawatt plant, about 100 miles south of Las Vegas, had repeatedly violated the Clean Air Act, contributing to haze at the Grand Canyon.

The utility, the plant's majority owner and operator, had hoped to keep it open as natural gas prices have continued to rise.

In a filing Thursday with the California Public Utilities Commission, Edison said it planned to continue negotiations aimed at keeping the plant open but expected to close it for at least a few months. The environmental groups have said they would not agree to a deadline extension.

The plant is the only customer of the Black Mesa mine near Kayenta, Ariz., which provides about 160 jobs to members of the Navajo Nation. The mine, run by Peabody Energy Corp., will likely be forced to close.

"It was the environmental groups that helped bring this about _ for altruistic reasons, of course _ but the result is that a lot of breadwinners are going to be out of work," said George Hardeen, a spokesman for the Navajo Nation.

Environmentalists said they sympathized with the tribes, but argued Edison had plenty of time to fix the plant's pollution problems. Edison should invest in renewable energy sources on tribal land, which would benefit the people "who have been exploited all of these years by the greater metropolitan centers of the West," said Roger Clark, director of the Grand Canyon Trust's air and energy program.