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## Coal-fired power plant challenged, endorsed

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CARSON CITY, Nev.—Clean-energy proponents want a federal panel to block a proposed coal-burning power plant in eastern Nevada, while Rep. Dean Heller, R-Nev., is urging Gov. Jim Gibbons to move ahead with the project.

The groups fighting the proposed White Pine Energy Station near Ely have asked the U.S. Department of Interior's Board of Land Appeals to reject the Bureau of Land Management's recent approval of rights of way for the plant that LS Power Group wants to build.

The project still needs air quality permits from the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection, and Heller on Wednesday urged Gibbons to quickly approve those permits so construction can start.

The state agency said last month that the permit application from LS Power, based in East Brunswick, N.J., is being re-evaluated following a federal EPA ruling that carbon dioxide emissions must be considered when issuing such permits.

Critics, represented by lawyers for Earthjustice, say the 1,590-megawatt project would be one of the largest and most heavily polluting coal plants in the West, emitting millions of tons of carbon dioxide and other harmful pollutants yearly.

The opponents include the Bristlecone Alliance, Sierra Club, Center for Biological Diversity, Nevada Wildlife Federation, Utah Physicians for a Health Environment, Western Resource Advocates, Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada and others.

"America's top scientists have made it clear that continuing to burn coal will lead directly to climate catastrophe," said Amy Atwood of Center for Biological Diversity. "We need to scrap proposals for obsolete, dirty coal plants like White Pine and move toward a clean energy future."

Other opponents include U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., who has said LS Power should withdraw the proposal and instead focus on clean renewable power.

In his letter to Gibbons, Heller said he knew the governor backed the project and state decisions on air permitting "are the sole remaining steps necessary before construction begins."

"The completion of this project will help secure the future of White Pine County, and the expansion of this plant could lead to other worthwhile projects of the same nature," Heller said.

At least two other coal-fired plants have been proposed in Nevada, including a 1,500-megawatt plant, also near Ely, that NV Energy wants to build; and Sithe Global Power's 750-megawatt project farther south near Mesquite.