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## Environmental groups file suit against Navajo Mine

By Chuck Slothower  
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FARMINGTON — A coalition of environmental groups has filed suit against BHP Billiton's plans to expand mining activities at Navajo Mine, saying an environmental analysis was insufficient.

The lawsuit filed late Tuesday appears likely to delay yet again BHP Billiton's plan to mine in Area IV North, a large undeveloped tract that holds vast coal deposits.

Navajo Mine feeds the adjacent Four Corners Power Plant, a 2,040-megawatt coal-fired power plant operated by Arizona Public Service Co. The mine and power plant sit on the Navajo Nation's eastern edge.

The controversy dates back to 2010, when a Colorado judge ordered the federal Office of Surface Mining, Reclamation and Enforcement to revisit its analysis of BHP Billiton's plans to mine 3,800 acres of Area IV North.

BHP Billiton responded with a more tightly focused analysis of a 714-acre area the company seeks to develop.

By focusing just on this smaller area, they're not really looking at the bigger picture," said Mike Eisenfeld, New Mexico energy coordinator for San Juan Citizens Alliance, a party to the lawsuit. "They failed to look at the impacts besides that small mining area. It's a tactic to say, 'hey, look, no impacts.'"

A spokesman for BHP Billiton did not immediately return a message seeking comment.