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## Environmental groups sue over New Mexico coal plant Actions taken against several U.S. federal agencies



The Four Corners Power Plant near Fruitland, New Mexico, is the subject of a lawsuit filed in federal court in Arizona. Photo credit SHAUN STANLEY/Durango Herald file

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Making good on a December vow, a coalition of environmental groups on Wednesday announced it had formally filed an action against the U.S. government for extending operations at a New Mexico coal plant and its associated mine.

Navajo, regional and national conservation groups announced in December they had filed a 60-day notice of intent to sue the Office of Surface Mining, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and others over a July decision to allow Four Corners Power Plant and Navajo Mine to operate until 2041.

The groups argue that the 25-year extension did not take into account the assessment of clean energy alternatives and environmental risks.

“The Four Corners mine-to-mouth coal complex represents a prime example of an energy operation that cannot operate without harming the surrounding people and environment,” said Shiloh Hernandez, attorney with the Western Environmental Law Center.

“That the U.S. Department of the Interior has largely swept these dangers aside is a health and environmental injustice, and its deafening silence on transition options is an economic injustice.”

In a statement announcing the official submission of the lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Arizona, the groups cite the recent string of bankruptcies, shutdowns and regulations facing the coal industry.

“Four Corners region coal has enabled far-off places like Phoenix and Southern California to thrive, so now that coal is on a permanent decline, we deserve real attention to how our region can diversify going forward,” Mike Eisenfeld, with San Juan Citizens Alliance, said in the prepared statement.

“Given the energy landscape today, it’s a serious disservice for government leaders to just tell the Four Corners to stick with collapsing coal without even a look at alternatives.”

Western Environmental Law Center, the Center for Biological Diversity and the Barth Law Office represent Diné Citizens Against Ruining Our Environment, San Juan Citizens Alliance, Amigos Bravos and the Sierra Club for this case.