

September 10, 2009

The Honorable Lisa Jackson  
Administrator  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Ariel Rios Building  
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington, D.C. 20460

**Re: Lamar, Colorado Coal-fired Power Plant Threatens Community**

Dear Administrator Jackson:

We need your help.

We are writing to you out of concern for the health and welfare of the community of Lamar, an agricultural community of nearly 10,000 located in Prowers County in eastern Colorado. Currently, a new coal-fired power plant is attempting to start up in the middle of the town of Lamar. In the past several weeks, there have been numerous episodes at the newly constructed plant that raise serious concerns over its ability to safely operate and protect the local community from harmful air pollution, coal ash waste, and other contaminants. We request the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's assistance in ensuring the health and safety of the community.

In 2007, Lamar Light and Power was granted permission by the State of Colorado to convert its natural-gas fired power plant to burn coal. Notwithstanding overwhelming concern from local citizens, Lamar Light and Power, with the support of the Arkansas River Power Authority, has since constructed a new 39 megawatt coal-fired boiler capable of powering not only the existing 25 megawatt turbine that was previously fired by natural gas, but powering a newly constructed 18 megawatt turbine. On May 18, 2009, Lamar Light and Power provided notice of start up of its coal-fired boiler to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Air Pollution Control Division.

Since that time, Lamar Light and Power and the Arkansas River Power Authority have attempted to bring the coal-fired power plant online, with frightening results. In July, Lamar Light and Power reported an unexpected valve malfunction at the power plant, which caused neighbors to fear for their safety. In a newspaper article attached to this letter, plant manager Rick Rigel reported that, "The operation went on longer than it had in the past and were (sic) not exactly sure why[.]" Additionally, throughout August, numerous steam venting events have occurred at the plant. Although Lamar Light and Power has indicated that these events are normal, they have been occurring with such frequency and duration that this is difficult to believe. Most recently, during a steam venting event on August 26, a hole was blown in the building housing the new 18 megawatt turbine. The picture below, shows the hole that was blown in the building as a result.



**Picture of hole in wall of turbine housing at Lamar Light and Power coal-fired power plant, which was created on August 26, 2009 (photo taken by Shirley Warren on August 26, 2009).**

In the meantime, a number of other troubling events have been witnessed and reported since the plant has attempted to start up, including:

- High opacity events and visible soot emissions;
- Smoldering coal in an on-site storage silo, which was reported in the local newspaper in the attached article;
- Off-site runoff of coal dust;
- Dust blowing off-site;
- A number of exceptionally loud and extended steam releases from a number of points at the facility;
- Inappropriate coal ash disposal at the local landfill; and
- Coal ash blowing from haul trucks and from the disposal site onto neighbors' properties and in public rights of ways.

Even worse, we have since learned that the Lamar Light and Power and the Arkansas River Power Authority are attempting to start up the power plant without legally required limits on toxic air emissions, including mercury, lead, arsenic, cyanide, hydrochloric acid, and benzene.

Section 112(g) required Lamar Light and Power to meet maximum achievable control limits on toxic air emissions before even beginning construction of the facility. To this day, Lamar Light and Power and the Arkansas River Power Authority still do not have the appropriate limits on toxic air pollution.

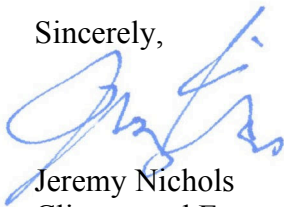
These events have not been far-removed from the community. The coal-fired power plant is located right next to peoples' homes and businesses. Many families live right next to the coal-fired power plant. Not surprisingly, many in the community are calling for an end to this misguided effort to start up a new coal-fired plant in the middle of Lamar. Because of safety and health concerns, over 300 community members have signed a petition calling on Lamar Light and Power and the Arkansas River Power Authority to abandon its plans. We have attached the signatures that have been gathered so far.

Needless to say, the operations occurring at the Lamar power plant do not appear to be normal, nor within permitted limits for operation.

We need your help. The health and safety of the community of Lamar is threatened by irresponsible operations of a dangerous coal-fired power plant. We need the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's oversight to rein in this dangerous operation. According to a recent article, Lamar Light and Power and the Arkansas River Power Authority intend to fully start-up their coal-fired power plant in the next few weeks. *See* [http://www.lamarledger.com/news/ci\\_13258034](http://www.lamarledger.com/news/ci_13258034). We urge you to utilize your oversight to prevent Lamar Light and Power and the Arkansas River Power Authority from starting up their coal-fired power plant

Please contact us at the information below if you have any questions or would like to discuss this matter further. Thank you for you time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Jeremy Nichols  
Climate and Energy Program Director  
WildEarth Guardians  
1536 Wynkoop, Suite 301  
Denver, CO 80202  
(303) 573-4898 x 1303  
[jnichols@wildearthguardians.org](mailto:jnichols@wildearthguardians.org)

Shirley and Charles Warren  
311 North 11<sup>th</sup> St.  
Lamar, CO 81052  
(719) 336-2227  
[tweetypi\\_56@yahoo.com](mailto:tweetypi_56@yahoo.com)

Cc: Colorado Governor Bill Ritter  
James Martin, Executive Director, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment  
Cynthia Giles, Assistant Administrator, Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Carol Rushin, Acting Regional Administrator, EPA Region 8  
Eddie Sierra, Acting Assistant Regional Administrator, Enforcement, Compliance, and Environmental Justice, EPA Region 8  
Senator Michael Bennett  
Senator Mark Udall  
Representative Betsy Markey