

To: The Gunnison County Electric Association
From: The Gunnison Valley Community Alliance (GVCA)
February 26, 2007

We, The Gunnison Valley Community Alliance, strongly urge the Gunnison County Electric Association not to sign a 10-year contract extension with Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association. Their plan to build three new coal-fired power plants is very short-sighted and seems to show a lack of awareness of current trends and serious problems.

Most of us know about the recent United Nations report on global warming, and await with some dread the coming April report on its effects on humanity. Many of us are aware of the particularly early and drastic climate effects in mountain areas such as Gunnison, such as frequent drought and even the loss of our beautiful wildflowers. Local scientists at RMBL have documented such effects occurring already.

A growing political consensus makes more and more likely carbon taxes and other actions which are likely to make coal plants an economic burden to our ratepayers, not the "cheap" solution anticipated by Tri-State. Similar arguments apply to the expectation of greatly increased electricity needs. Will the gas and methane drilling really increase as anticipated, or will the demands of public interest curtail this? Furthermore, the drilling companies are quite capable of generating their own electric power, since they have an energy source in their own product and would also avoid most transmission costs.

A threat of increased rates if we do not sign this contract does not sit well with us. The main result is more interest among consumers in alternate energy sources as well as serious energy conservation. We have seen this happen already in Gunnison among "early adopters," but the real impact will occur as the cost of solar electric and other technologies rapidly decreases. Wind power has already become much cheaper, and there is much promising research that seems almost certain to make photovoltaic power available to the consumer at a much lower cost in the very near future. GCEA as well as Tri-State will lose business if photovoltaic shingles and other collectors start to show up all over the countryside. Above all, energy conservation is already quite cost effective with present technology and will only get cheaper.

We hope the GCEA will join rural electric co-ops who have already refused to sign this contract. Perhaps if enough of us refuse to sign, Tri-State will listen and join the modern world by coming up with a better solution involving cleaner new-technology coal generating plants, perhaps with carbon sequestration, and plants that use renewable resources. We don't want to explain to our grandchildren how we failed!