

Plans for 750 MW gas-PV New Mexico plant revealed

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Western Energy Partners has unveiled plans to build a 750 MW gas-PV power plant in New Mexico. The power plant will replace aged coal generators, in a part of the state that has highly degraded water and air quality due to fossil fuel operations. While the PV component is dwarfed by the gas plant, it will supply power during high demand periods.



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A 680 MW natural gas plant will be co-located with a 70 MW PV plant to replace coal generators in the Fourth Corners and Desert Southwest region of [New Mexico](#). Developers Western Energy Partners are labeling the hybrid power plant an innovative power generation project and it has been called the Clean Path Energy Center.

The project will be developed on privately owned land near Waterflow, an area that features a large coal mine and many oil wells. The region is known for its air pollution, including high ozone alert days, with the Sierra Club having labeled the groundwater in the area as “extremely polluted,” due to the operations of the coal mine.

“The Clean Path Energy Center is ideally located to take full advantage of the robust natural gas and electrical infrastructure in San Juan County,” said Curt Hildebrand, President of Western Energy Partners. The San Juan County Commission has endorsed the project, saying it can replace the region’s coal power plants in a cost effective and sustainable fashion.

“The... project is designed to take full advantage of the recent and dramatic technological advances in modern gas turbine and solar PV technologies,” said San Juan County Executive Officer Dr. Kim J. Carpenter. “The 680 MW combined cycle plant will be capable of providing baseload generation around the clock... Additionally, the renewable 70 MW Solar PV power block will be capable of providing additional

renewable peaking generation capacity that is critical during times of higher system loads.”

[Local media](#) had reported that the continued operation of the San Juan Generating Station coal-fired power plant had been highly contentious after the EPA imposed regulations requiring pollution reduction technology to the power plants smoke stacks, to tackle “regional haze.” The plant’s operator had claimed the move would have made the power plant uneconomic.

Canadian firm SNC-Lavalin has been named as the EPC contractor on the Clean Path Energy Center project, with private equity firm Stonepeak Partners providing US\$1.7 billion in financing.

[First Solar has been particularly active in New Mexico](#), developing a series of utility scale projects in the state. Due to its abundant solar resources, the region is also well suited to rooftop PV, with [SolarCity launching an operations center in the state](#) earlier this week.