

# New power plant could completely replace coal-fired plant in Four Corners

Updated: 04/08/2015 5:52 PM | Created: 04/08/2015 4:56 PM  
By: Devin Neeley, KOB Eyewitness News 4



WATERFLOW, NM — For decades, two coal-fired power plants have generated power for New Mexico, Arizona and as far away as California in the Four Corners. Now, as efforts are underway to retire part or all of those two plants, the effort is also on to replace them with cleaner power sources. In an area in the shadow of the hogback landform between Shiprock and Farmington, change is brewing. The land - currently empty, save a few beer bottles, scrub brush and the occasional rabbit - is within view of both the San Juan Generation Station and the Four Corners Generating Station, and could soon have another power plant churning out electricity for the western United States. In the shadow of two coal-fired power plants **could soon be a new billion-dollar hub for clean power.**

“[It will be] the most efficiently designed plant in the western United States, further augmented by green, solar renewable power,” said Curt Hildebrand, president of Western Energy Partners.

The proposed site of the clean path energy center is along Highway 64, about 20 miles west of Farmington. The site includes 440 acres of solar panels with a potential generation capacity of 70 megawatts and a natural gas-fired power plant, with a capacity of 680 megawatts.

“Our gas line will be using local production,” said Hildebrand, speaking of the fossil-fuel rich San Juan Basin. “We have a tremendous solar resource, so it is ideally suited to fill future needs.”

Western Energy Partners says the natural gas that will be used will come at a discount, and the existing power transmission lines, installed to distribute power from the other plants, make the area perfect.

The company also says it expects to hire about 800 workers to build the plant and 30 people to run it when it is open.

“We envision that the vast majority of jobs will be filled from right here in San Juan County,” he said. Work won’t begin until the plant gets the proper permits-- which could take about two years.

“But we are very optimistic given the commercial outlook for the project and the permitting,” said Hildebrand.

Early numbers report that **property taxes paid to San Juan County could be around \$9 million,** which is good news, since the county has been losing about \$1 million a year in property and gross receipt taxes after the closure of three of six units at the Four Corners Generation Station and sale of BHP Billiton mine to the Navajo Nation.