

# CASE STUDY

## Stop the Cassville Coal Plant



Nelson Dewey State Park, overlooking the Mississippi River, Cassville

### Project Summary

Taken together, greenhouse gas emissions from the Midwest's eight states makes the region the fourth-largest polluter in the world. So when Alliant Energy, an investor-owned utility serving southern Wisconsin, proposed to construct a 300-megawatt coal-fired power plant on the shores of the Mississippi River in 2008, Clean Wisconsin went to work to prevent the construction of yet another unnecessary coal plant and curb the rising costs of climate change.

In an attempt to gain support for the project at the Public Service Commission (PSC), the company promised to burn either 10% or 20% biomass, displacing the amount of the coal that would otherwise be used for fuel. Clean Wisconsin and Citizens Utility Board worked together to challenge the proposal on cost and environmental issues, particularly the soundness of the company's biomass procurement plan and the cost impacts of carbon regulation. In addition, Clean Wisconsin and the Sierra Club organized an unprecedented number of citizens who signed petitions and testified at hearings in opposition to the project.

As a party to the contested case proceeding, Clean Wisconsin commented on the draft environmental impact statement (EIS) and submitted testimony and briefs. The final EIS contained the most robust discussion of coal's role in exacerbating global warming that any Wisconsin state agency has produced before or since.

Proposed at a time when it appeared that some form of federal carbon regulation might soon be enacted, Clean Wisconsin's expert testimony proved persuasive. The project was denied in a 3-0 decision because it was "not in the public interest after considering alternative sources of supply, engineering, economic, and reliability factors" under Wis. Stat. §196.491. In addition, the Final Decision noted that "other forms of electric generation ... are cost-effective, technically feasible, and environmentally sound alternatives to (Alliant's) project." The PSC's final order recognized the plant's potential to negatively impact Wisconsin's environment, stating that "this large increase in greenhouse gas emissions takes this utility and this state in the wrong direction at a time when carbon constraints are imminent."

The Cassville case set a precedent for setting a dollar value on carbon, which is still followed at the PSC to this day, and made it evident that new coal plants were unlikely to be approved.

### Project Details

**Date** 2008

**Location** Grant Co.,  
Southwestern Wisconsin

**Project Type** Coal

**Other Parties Involved**

Citizens Utility Board,  
Sierra Club

**Venue** PSC



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