

**AMERICAN ELECTRIC POWER (AEP) SUED FOR “THOUSANDS” OF FEDERAL,
STATE AIR POLLUTION VIOLATIONS AT TEXAS SWEPCO PLANT**

***Lawsuit by Sierra Club, Public Citizen Cites Evidence from Whistleblower;
Health-Threatening Soot Violations Seen Regularly Since March 2000***

DALLAS, TX///March 10, 2005///Two groups – the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club and the Texas office of Public Citizen – are filing a federal lawsuit today to force American Electric Power (NYSE: AEP), the nation’s largest utility company, to clean up extensive air pollution problems at its Welsh power plant operation near Pittsburg in Titus County in east Texas. According to the complaint filed in the U.S. District Court of the Eastern District of Texas, AEP’s Southwest Electric Power Company (SWEPCO) division power plant is emitting levels of soot (also known as “particulate matter”) and carbon monoxide far in excess of what is allowed under the federal Clean Air Act and the laws of the state of Texas.

The Sierra Club and Public Citizen lawsuit is based in part on detailed information from AEP’s own records first brought to light in July 2004 by the nonprofit Environmental Integrity Project (EIP). Last summer, EIP urged the U.S. Justice Department to open a criminal investigation of American Electric Power for extensive violations of the Clean Air Act as outlined by whistleblower Bill Wilson, a SWEPCO air quality engineer who was fired by AEP in May 2004 after calling attention to a wide range of air pollution problems at Welsh and two other power plants.

Tom “Smitty” Smith, director of Public Citizen’s Texas office, said: **“American Electric Power seems to think that violating the Clean Air Act is good for business. But it’s bad news for the health of Texans, who we are seeking to protect by taking AEP to court today. We had no choice but to file this citizen lawsuit. The Environmental Protection Agency and the state have had years to step in and do something meaningful to end this problem. Instead, they sat on their hands. As became very apparent when a whistleblower finally exposed last year what is really going on at the company, AEP relies upon a ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ approach to complying with America’s environmental laws.”**

Neal Carman, clean air director of the Lone Star Sierra Club, said: **“For some time now, we've been concerned about the cozy relationship between the nation's largest utility polluters and officials at the federal and state level. We know what the problems are at the Welsh plant. The solutions are affordable and have been available for many years. So, the company has no excuse for allowing these health and environment problems to persist. We have the laws to fix this problem. It is high time that all parties abide by those laws.”**

EIP Director Eric Schaeffer said: **“While the Justice Department continues to settle cases left over from the last Administration, the White House has blocked the filing of new lawsuits against power plant polluters. When government agencies aren't allowed to enforce the law, the public has no choice but to ask the courts to order cleanups.”**

The Sierra Club/Public Citizen complaint outlines as many as 2,000 violations where AEP and its SWEPCO division exceeded limits on particulate matter pollution and carbon monoxide emissions. For example, the lawsuit points out that one of the boilers at the Welsh plant has been in “nearly daily” violation of the soot limits for several years. Studies by the EPA have linked particulate matter from power plants to hundreds of thousands of asthma attacks, and tens of thousands of premature deaths from lung cancer and heart disease.

The two groups are asking the court to force AEP to clean up the extensive Welsh plant air pollution problems and also to impose civil penalties of up to \$32,500 per day for each violation. Prior to filing the lawsuit, the plaintiffs outlined their concerns in writing on July 13, 2004, to the administrator of the U.S. EPA, the governor of Texas, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (“TCEQ”) and AEP/SWEPCO. The complaint alleges that “AEP and SWEPCO have violated and remain in violation of the Act. Neither EPA nor TCEQ has commenced and diligently prosecuted a court action to redress these violations.”

To read the full text of the Sierra Club/Public Citizen complaint, log on to <http://www.environmentalintegrity.org>.

AEP is headquartered in Columbus, Ohio, and is the largest electricity generator in the United States. AEP directly or through wholly owned subsidiaries owns and operates approximately 80 power plants, more than 50 of which are coal-fired power plants. AEP is also among the largest electric utilities in the United States, serving more than five million customers through its 11-state electricity transmission and distribution grid. AEP reported 2003 revenues of \$14.5 billion. AEP owns and operates the Welsh Plant through its wholly owned subsidiary, Southwestern Electric Power Company. The Welsh Power Plant is a coal-fired power plant with three coal-fired boiler units generating a total 1,650 megawatts of electric power.

ABOUT THE GROUPS

Since 1984, Public Citizen's Texas State Office (<http://www.citizen.org/texas/>) has concerned itself with: environmental enforcement policies, global warming, promoting renewable/clean energy, product safety, nuclear safety, medical safety, auto safety/quality, pesticide safety, insurance reforms, campaign finance/ethics issues, improving state government agency operations and fair trade policies. We have trained over 175 interns and have worked with/mentored numerous grassroots organizations.

The Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club (<http://texas.sierraclub.org>) consists of over 23,000 members. The Chapter spans the entire state of Texas, excepting El Paso, which is part of the Rio Grande Chapter. Located in Austin, the Lone Star Chapter's State Conservation Office serves Sierrans as their grassroots communications center. We also provide Sierrans with a full time professional activist staff employed to serve Sierrans as we fight at the state level to protect and preserve Texas' diverse and valuable natural heritage.

The Environmental Integrity Project (<http://www.environmentalintegrity.org>) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization established in March of 2002 to advocate for more effective enforcement

of environmental laws. EIP was founded by Eric Schaeffer, who was director of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Regulatory Enforcement. He resigned in 2002 after publicly expressing his frustration with efforts of the Bush Administration to weaken enforcement of the Clean Air Act and other laws.

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