

Closing power plant is first step in new era of energy

by **Vernon Masayesva**

Contrary to the gloomy news article Sunday regarding the adverse economic impacts of Mohave Generating Station's imminent closure, many Hopis see it as an unprecedented opportunity to cut our umbilical cord to Peabody Energy and take control of our resources ("Shutdown of power plant bringing gloom to N. Arizona," *Republic*, Sunday).

Since its creation in 1998, Black Mesa Trust has conducted an aggressive, ongoing campaign to protect the Navajo Aquifer - the wellspring of life and heart blood of culture for the Hopi and Diné (Navajo) peoples.

We demanded an end to 40 years of ecological damage and spiritual disrespect. We demanded that Peabody Energy end its devastating drawdown of our waters and the transportation of that water from Arizona to Nevada to slurry coal. (The company draws down 1.2 billion gallons annually. Compare this to Rio Salado Lake in Tempe, which contains 900 million gallons of renewable water.)

Miraculously, we are close to winning.

On Dec. 31, our small Hopi grass-roots organization will have accomplished something quite extraordinary: We will have forced the world's largest coal company to end its plundering of our waters. When the pumps stop, a beautiful silence will descend upon our sacred land, and we will rejoice.

In our small way, we changed history. Those who have and would continue to turn our ancestral homes into lands of national sacrifice were brought to a halt.

Our voices were heard and, against all odds, the power of our teachings and our faith in our religion and science prevailed.

We will win - and, as with all victories, there is a price. We cannot again shrink from our responsibilities; we cannot simply return to business as usual.

We cannot again fall asleep. We must continue to speak out for balance and sustainability, for the well-being of a living and sacred Earth. We fully realize the closures of Mohave and the Peabody coal mine will cause severe economic consequences for our people.

In anticipation of this, Black Mesa Trust has proposed several economic alternatives that will make it unnecessary to lay off any Hopi employees and at the same time increase revenues for village governmental services.

One ambitious alternative is the Colorado Plateau Clean Energy Initiative, a proposed consortium of various organizations dedicated to bringing clean, renewable energy to Northern Arizona, and the development of regional global-warming reduction plans.

New opportunities include:

- The development and construction of a 1,000-megawatt solar power plant on Hopi and Navajo land. The construction and operation of the plant will employ more than 1,000 workers and could generate annual revenues of more than \$10 million. The solar plant will provide much-needed "peaking power" to Phoenix, Los Angeles and other metropolitan areas in the Southwest.
- The production of high-value-added biofuels such as ethanol and biodiesel.
- The gasification of coal to produce syngas that can be methanated into a natural-gas substitute for coal combustion, using only a fraction of the water needed to operate coal-fired plants.
- A significant increase in tribal education, training employment and revenues.
- The establishment of an international clean-energy showcase that honors the stewardship responsibilities of indigenous peoples.

In March 2006, 15 Hopi runners will help celebrate our victory by bringing a gourd of water gathered from our sacred springs to the Fourth World Forum on Water in Mexico City. We will tell the world government

ministers that all waters are one, a singular life-sustaining living organism, the source of life for a living earth.

Along the way we will meet with tribal groups and elders who will add their spirit and blessing, their energy and hope, to our Run of Respect for Water and All Life.

They will add words to the messages and prayers, and we will invite them to run with us.

The writer, a former chairman of the Hopi Tribe, is founder and executive director of Black Mesa Trust. Further information on the mission of Black Mesa Trust and the Hopi Run is available at www.h2opirun.org and www.blackmesatrust.org.

Taken from [The Arizona Republic](#).