In a victory for clean air and clean energy, on June 20th, 2011, CPS Energy announced that they would retire the polluting 871-megawatt J.T. Deely coal-fired power plant by 2018—about fifteen years earlier than planned.1

The CEO of CPS Energy has made it clear on multiple occasions that no jobs will be lost as a result of the retirement, as workers will be transferred to other positions within the utility.2 CPS Energy has committed to investing in clean, renewable energy, paving the way for San Antonio to become a job creator and a leader in the new clean-energy economy.

Clean-energy and energy-conservation companies including OCI Solar Power, Nexelon, SunEdison, Consort Energy, and GreenStar, will satisfy much of the electricity demand in the CPS Energy service area once the Deely coal plant is retired, bringing clean energy jobs to San Antonio.

- **OCI Solar Power** will build solar panel parts and solar power plants in San Antonio, providing 400 megawatts of power a year. OCI Solar Power and Nexelon—another solar parts supplier—will move their headquarters to San Antonio, providing $100 million in capital investments and bringing 800 jobs to the San Antonio area.3

- **SunEdison** is a solar developer that will locate 30 megawatts of new solar generation in the CPS Energy service area. Construction jobs are estimated to be between 60 and 90 per 10-megawatt facility, bringing 270 jobs to the San Antonio area.4

- **Conser Energy** provides energy-conservation technology and is expected to improve energy efficiency in 140,000 households and small businesses and bring 50 jobs to San Antonio by 2012, with additional jobs expected as the company grows.5

- **GreenStar** will replace 25,000 street lights in San Antonio, improving the efficiency of decades-old infrastructure. The company expects to create 50 jobs in San Antonio in 2012, and has committed $10 for every light manufactured in San Antonio to local education initiatives that focus on energy efficiency and renewable-energy technology.6

CPS Energy is also a leader in wind energy, with 1,059 megawatts of capacity under contract. The utility ranks among the nation’s lowest-cost energy providers while ranking #1 in wind-energy capacity among municipally-owned utilities.7

A champion of clean energy, San Antonio mayor Julian Castro told the Associated Press, “San Antonio understands the nexus between sustainability and job creation. We’re confident that we can achieve an economic and environmental gain. They’re not mutually exclusive.”8
EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson observed that “San Antonio is stepping up to lead Texas and our nation into a clean energy future—and proving that investing in innovative technology to protect our health and the environment is also a great way to create jobs. Committing to cleaner sources of power will mean cleaner air for the families in San Antonio and new opportunities for San Antonio’s workforce.”

**SIERRA CLUB’S INVOLVEMENT**

The Sierra Club and its allies were integral in driving CPS Energy to retire the Deely coal plant, which, in Mayor Castro’s words, will help make San Antonio’s “New Energy Economy what Silicon Valley is to software and what Boston is to biotech.” The campaign was largely driven by local activists, who tirelessly built support among influential decision-makers, including Mayor Castro.

To win this victory, the Sierra Club:

- Worked in partnership with a strong coalition consisting of the Club’s Alamo Group and Lone Star Chapter and our allies at Public Citizen, SEED, Solar San Antonio, the Jefferson Heights Neighborhood Association, COPS Metro, the Esperanza Center, Energia Mia, and Southwest Worker’s Union
- Developed influential relationships and regularly met with Mayor Castro, City Council members, and held quarterly meetings with the CEO of CPS Energy. Loretta Van Coppenolle, the Alamo Group’s conservation chair, organized more than 25 presentations on clean energy at monthly Alamo Group meetings, where City Council members or their representatives would often be in attendance
- Gave presentations to crowds of up to 200 people, held a press conference highlighting pollution from Texas power plants, and wrote letters to the editor

In a pivotal moment for the campaign, Sierra Club activists met with Doyle Beneby, the CEO of CPS Energy, and advocated for—at the very least—installing pollution-control technology to clean up the Deely coal plant. Russell Seal, a pharmacist and the Alamo Group’s volunteer political chair, told Beneby that his pharmacy had sold out of asthma inhalers and couldn’t ship them in fast enough to meet the growing demand. Pointing out that the primary cause of asthma in the area during late summer was pollution from the coal-fired power plant, Seal pleaded, “We don’t need your help selling inhalers.”

Soon after that meeting, CPS Energy announced that instead of investing half-a-billion dollars in pollution controls on the outdated Deely plant, it would retire the plant by 2018 and invest in cleaner sources of energy. Additionally, CPS confirmed that despite earlier plans to make a 40 percent investment in a new nuclear plant, pressure from the Sierra Club and its coalition allies led the company to conclude that the nuclear investment should no longer be part of CPS Energy’s long-term energy plans.

The steadfast efforts of the Sierra Club and its allies have helped clean the air and make San Antonio a leader in clean technology jobs. To show its appreciation and commitment to continuing to work with CPS Energy to bring green jobs to San Antonio, in March 2012 the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club honored Beneby with a special service award for his contribution to a cleaner Texas.

**ENDNOTES**

2. Loretta Van Coppenolle, “Victory in San Antonio!” Message from Sierra Club to members. 18 July 2011. E-mail.