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For Immediate Release

December 9, 2005

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Great Rivers Environmental Law Center Warns of Increased Health Risks if Coal Plant is Built

Global warming and health problems will be increased because of a ruling issued December 8 by the Air Conservation Commission in Springfield, Missouri. The Commission voted, without public discussion, to allow a permit to go forth allowing City Utilities of Springfield to emit hundreds of tons of carbon dioxide into the air. Carbon dioxide is a major cause of global warming. The permit also allows the utility company to emit hundreds of tons of nitrogen oxides and sulfur dioxide into the air every year, both of which contribute to asthma, sudden infant death syndrome and respiratory problems.

The construction of this new plant will raise rates for customers, but reducing the use of energy efficiency measures would save money and avoid the harmful effects of coal-burning plants.

Great Rivers Environmental Law Center represented Linda Chipperfield and the Sierra Club in their appeal of the permit issued by the Department of Natural Resources. They appealed it on the grounds the state did not require the utility company to use the best available technology that would limit the pollutants emitted. They maintain the state failed to do so and that the Air Conservation Commission's order is in error, and they will appeal the ruling to the circuit court.

"It is a sad day for Missourians when our state government gives a green light to companies to pollute when there are affordable technologies readily available that would significantly lessen the pollutants emitted," said Kathleen Henry of Great Rivers Environmental Law Center, one of the attorneys representing the plaintiffs. "In this case the state did not even investigate these better technologies but allowed the utility to choose some of the worst available technologies without questioning it. This violates the duty of the state."

Great Rivers is a non-profit, public interest environmental organization in St. Louis that works to promote clean energy, clean air and clean water. Its web address is: www.greatriverslaw.org.