

Kane County seeks to give up water for nuke plant

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — The Kane County Water Conservancy District has asked for permission to lease some of its water rights to operators of a proposed nuclear power project.

The district has agreed to lease the water -- nearly 30,000 acre feet a year -- for the plant about six miles west of Green River in Emery County.

An acre-foot is about 326,000 gallons, enough to cover an acre of land with a foot of water or serve one or two households for a year.

Hearings on the transfer are months away, said Utah Deputy State Engineer Boyd Clayton. Some environmental groups are objecting to a water diversion for what would be Utah's first nuclear power plant.

The plant would be licensed by Transition Power LLC, a company headed by Aaron Tilton of Springville, a former state representative.

Consultants Energy Path of North Carolina and former Nuclear Regulatory Commission Chairman Nils Diaz are equity owners in the company, Tilton said.

Kane County says it has rights to take water out of Lake Powell, but can claim the water hundreds of miles upstream and transfer it to somebody else.

The water district signed a contract to transfer the water rights in exchange for payments starting at \$100,000 per year and growing to \$1 million by the time the plant is operating.

"That's a great deal for us," Rep. Mike Noel, R-Kanab, executive director of the Kane County Water Conservancy District, said Tuesday. "We only have 7,000 people in this county -- \$1 million a year can do a lot of things for us."

Noel said Andalex Resources Inc. donated the water rights to Kane County after President Clinton in 1996 created the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, which scuttled the company's plans to mine and burn coal for electricity on the Kaiparowits Plateau.

The company got a charitable tax deduction, he said.

Healthy Environment Alliance of Utah Director Christopher Thomas said his group, which opposes nuclear power and nuclear waste coming to the state, might lead the fight against the water transfer.

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