Sierra Club wants coal out of Liberty's portfolio

By Kathryn Reed

The Sierra Club is on a mission to get Liberty Utilities to stop using coal.

The national environmental group is behind a campaign to prevent the electric company from renewing its contract with North Valmy when it expires at the end of the year.

Liberty supplies power to the California side of the Lake Tahoe Basin, Truckee, Alpine County and other areas.

"We are the last Californians using coal to heat our hot tubs," Grace Anderson with the Tahoe Area Sierra Club chapter said at last week's meeting.

According to the California Energy Commission, "Electricity supplies from existing coal and petroleum coke plants represented about 8 percent of the total energy requirements to serve loads in California during 2012. A little over 93 percent of this coal-based energy came from power plants located outside California."

Valmy is in Humboldt County in Nevada.

Liberty gets 5.2 percent of its power from coal.

The problem with coal, according to the Sierra Club, is how dirty it is.

"Coal is the absolute dirtiest of all energy sources and the greatest contributor to global warming: coal-fired power plants are responsible for over 83 percent of the CO2 pollution since 1990, and have the highest ratio of CO2 output per unit of electricity out of all the fossil fuels,"

according to Green America.

On Nov. 17, 2008, then Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed Executive Order S-14-08 requiring that "…[a]ll retail sellers of electricity shall serve 33 percent of their load with renewable energy by 2020."

Based on the graphic below from Liberty's website, the company is nowhere close to meeting that mandate.

	Liberty Utilities		
Power Source	Known Resources	System Power	Total
Biomass	2.1%	0.1%	**2.2%**
Coal	0.0%	5.2%	**5.2%**
Hydro	1.0%	1.2%	**2.2%**
Imported Power	0.0%	13.9%	**13.9%**
Landfill Gas	0.0%	0.0%	**0.0%**
Municipal Trash	0.0%	0.7%	**0.7%**
Natural Gas	0.0%	38.8%	**38.8%**
Nuclear	0.0%	29.5%	**29.5%**
Oil (inc. Diesel & Jet)	0.0%	6.8%	**6.8%**
Other Renewable	0.0%	0.0%	**0.0%**
Solar	0.0%	0.0%	**0.0%**
Wind	0.6%	0.1%	**0.7%**
Total	**3.7%**	**96.3%**	**100%**

Liberty buys much of its power from NV Energy. NV in 2013 said

it would begin eliminating coal immediately. However, the Valmy plant is expected to be online through 2025.

While the local Sierra Club chapter has not taken a stance on the issue, Anderson is working with the national Sierra Club to get the Canada-based power company to rethink how it does business.

There will be hearings about the Valmy plant before the state Public Utilities Commission later this year. The Sierra Club is on a letter writing campaign to the CPUC to stop Liberty from using coals.