

# FutureGen, wind aim for green Illinois

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Energy. It is the lifeblood of economies and the topic of discussion for many news outlets. But with rising costs and instable governments in the Middle East, there has been a push to develop domestic sources of clean energy. The future for clean energy in Illinois could be near.

## Illinois vs. Texas

Illinois is currently in a competition with Texas to house the first near-zero-emissions coal power plant. The \$1.5 billion project, called FutureGen Alliance, is being headed by the U.S. Department of Energy and a consortium of 10 energy companies from all over the world.

FutureGen was started in 2003 by President Bush when he asked the Department of Energy to begin developing energy technologies that would capture carbon dioxide for storage or other uses. The project will be the first of its kind in the world to inject the captured carbon dioxide into underground reservoirs in a process called carbon sequestration. Scientists have blamed the burning of fossil fuels and the release of carbon dioxide as one of the main causes of global warming.

"This project makes coal, one of the most abundant fossil energies in the world, available in the future in the face of growing concern over greenhouse gas emissions and climate change," said Jeff Jarrett, the Energy Department's assistant secretary of fossil energy, in an Associated Press report.

The winner will be announced in September 2007 and the plant will be fully operational about five years later.

In order to attract the eye of the selection committee, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity created the FutureGen for Illinois Task Force to promote the two Illinois sites at Tuscola and Mattoon.

Andrew Ross, a spokesman for the department, is hopeful that Illinois will be the desired spot for the project.

"Geology, infrastructure, incentives - all of these give Illinois an advantage over Texas," he said.

The main attraction of Tuscola and Mattoon is the abundance of coal and the thick sandstone underneath the sites that would store the carbon waste. Additionally, they are close to railways, highways and power lines.

Ross was most excited about the potential of these sites for the coal industry in Illinois, which has suffered because it is notoriously high in sulfur.

"Looking at the big picture, if coal is to be king again, it needs to be clean," he said.

## Power politics

Another attraction to the site is the potential for political independence.

"If we are going to lessen our foreign oil dependency, we need to take advantage of what we have an abundance of - coal," Ross said.

According to a recent study conducted by Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, if Illinois is chosen, the state could see the addition of 150 permanent jobs, 1,300 construction jobs and 1,225 indirect and spinoff jobs. Once the plant is up and running, the study projects that it would generate \$135 million annually.

Senate Bill 1704, the bill that would allow its construction, is currently being held up because of the culpability that FutureGen wants from the state. If the carbon dioxide were to be released or if some sort of problems were to arise, the alliance does not want to be held legally accountable.

"The attorney general wanted to take a long look at the legal issues," said Rep. William Black, R-Vermillion, a co-sponsor of the bill. "But, I'm hopeful that we'll vote on it soon."

With the attention surrounding the project, Black worried that many would see this as an answer to all of Illinois' energy needs.

"It isn't going to be the saviour of our energy issues," said Black. "It is just another piece of the sustainable energy puzzle."

## Capturing wind power

Other legislators seem to understand this.

Rep. Naomi Jakobsson of Urbana joined a group of officials on Thursday for a tour of the Twin Groves Wind Farm near Bloomington-Normal, which recently opened Phase I of the farm.

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