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State of Illinois, FutureGen partners highlight significant progress and unwavering commitment to bring project home to Mattoon

New round of geophysical testing further validates that Central Illinois is the ideal location for the safe capture and storage of carbon dioxide

MATTOON – Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Director Jack Lavin today assembled national, state and local partners to announce new developments in the state’s effort to secure the landmark FutureGen clean energy project. The progress report included new geophysical data that confirm the suitability of the Mattoon host site to securely store greenhouse gases captured from the world-class coal-to-electricity project.

“The amazing team that worked for years to bring FutureGen to Illinois is still moving the ball forward to make this critical project a reality,” said Lavin. “With this effort, we’re making the best possible case to President-elect Obama and his energy policy team that the path to energy independence goes right through Mattoon, Illinois.”

Joining Lavin was Mike Mudd, CEO of the FutureGen Alliance, an international coalition of leading energy companies that will build and operate the \$1.8 billion FutureGen facility. Also participating in the announcement in downtown Mattoon were leaders of the Coles Together economic development agency, the Illinois Clean Coal Review Board and the Illinois State Geological Survey.

Nearly a year ago, Mattoon was chosen to host the FutureGen project after a rigorous three-year site review process. Shortly after the announcement, the United States Department of Energy (USDOE) abruptly suspended federal government participation in the FutureGen project. For the past year, the State of Illinois and Illinois supporters in Congress, led by Senator Richard Durbin, have worked to sustain the project’s momentum until a new president took office and FutureGen could be reauthorized.

Mudd was in Illinois to complete the purchase of the 400-plus-acre plant site just west of Mattoon. The FutureGen Alliance and Coles Together recently combined funds to

purchase the site, using nearly \$3 million raised locally by Coles Together along with non-public Alliance funds provided by the group's 13 member companies.

“The Alliance’s commitment to FutureGen at Mattoon is evidenced by all that we have accomplished since USDOE’s cost sharing ceased in June,” Mudd said. “Using the Alliance’s own financial resources, along with financial support of the Clean Coal Review Board and the State of Illinois, we have continued with the engineering and design of the plant, and we have purchased the land upon which FutureGen at Mattoon will be constructed. With the ongoing support of our advocates on Capitol Hill, we will work with the new administration to put FutureGen at Mattoon back on the fast track.”

FutureGen has been designed to pioneer capture and underground storage of greenhouse gases from a coal-fueled electric plant. The geo-physical test results disclosed Friday confirm that FutureGen carbon dioxide output – injected to a depth of 7,400 feet beneath the plant site – can be absorbed in a thick layer of porous rock (the Mt. Simon sandstone) and kept in place by a layer of unbroken, non-porous cap rock (the Eau Clair shale).

“This newly collected and analyzed geophysical data confirms the earlier interpretation by the Illinois State Geological Survey that the bedrock at the Mattoon site is very capable of long-term deep storage of carbon dioxide,” said William Shilts, executive director of the Institute of Natural Resource Sustainability (INRS) at the University of Illinois.

In addition to the geophysical tests, Lavin and Mudd reported on significant progress over the past 12 months in developing scientific data that will be needed to obtain permits for the plant and CO₂ capture system, as well as advanced design work on the coal gasification facility that will produce 275 megawatts of electricity.

The State of Illinois and the public-private Illinois Clean Coal Review Board each has committed \$2 million to support ongoing scientific and technical studies. The contributions have been critical in keeping FutureGen at Mattoon within months of groundbreaking, and years ahead of any similar initiative that would start from scratch.

“A year ago, FutureGen at Mattoon supporters from across the spectrum came to the same conclusion – that this project was too important and too far along for us to simply cease and desist,” said Angela Griffin, president of Coles Together. “We have sustained our enthusiasm and, working together, we have achieved an increased state of readiness.”

FutureGen is intended to lay the groundwork for similar plants around the country and the world. It is important to Illinois and other coal states because it advances near-zero emissions technology to pave the way for America’s continued use of coal. At a time of rising unemployment, it also creates jobs and economic growth.

Initial estimates state that 1,300 construction jobs and 150 permanent jobs would be created through FutureGen. In addition, an SIU study showed that during the four-year construction period, there would also be more than \$1 billion in economic impact statewide and 1,225 indirect and induced spin-off jobs created as a result of the ripple effect generated by FutureGen.

Once the facility is operational, the study pointed out that FutureGen would generate \$135 million annually in total statewide economic output, with an \$85 million annual increase in Coles County. It will also create an additional 360 indirect and induced full-time jobs statewide, according to the report.

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