

Governor blasts Department of Energy's plans

By Meg Thilmony

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Gov. Rod Blagojevich released an angry statement Tuesday after learning of the Department of Energy's plans to "restructure" the FutureGen plans.

"Only after it became clear that an Illinois site would be chosen over a Texas site, the department suggested the project be delayed and now today, that it be dismantled," said Gov. Rod Blagojevich in a written statement.

"Secretary (of the Department of Energy) Samuel Bodman is not only jeopardizing the benefits FutureGen promises to deliver, but he deceived the people of East Central Illinois who spent time and resources competing for the project."

Department of Energy spokeswoman Julie Ruggiero declined to offer specifics Tuesday evening about what's happening to FutureGen, other than say the department still wants it to be restructured.

She reiterated that the department is dedicated to the project, but wants to make sure it's built in the most cost-efficient manner.

"We remain committed to FutureGen's goals and its objectives," Ruggiero said, including advancing clean coal-burning technology. "That hasn't changed." However, she wouldn't disclose how the project has changed, other than that the Energy department will make more details available in coming days.

And while Illinois politicians are decrying the news that FutureGen may be no more, FutureGen Alliance spokesman Lawrence Pacheco said the alliance has gotten no official statement from the Department of Energy.

"All the alliance has heard is vague statements about how the DOE wants to restructure the project," Pacheco said.

As far as the alliance is concerned, Pacheco said, it still has a cooperative agreement with the department, "and it's still in effect today," he said.