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<http://gcherald.com/news/energy-park-garners-national-attention.shtml>

Energy park garners national attention

July 26, 2007

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By Erica Goff

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"This funding will help get the project started. It will be used to complete the site planning and do some other assessment work necessary to get started," said Congressman Dave Camp following last week's announcement of funds, provided by the Energy and Water Appropriations Act.

Camp said the project has the potential to "really put Gratiot County on the map" due to the innovative technologies for coal gasification and oil recovery, which are "cutting edge" on a national scale.

"These energy concerns are really a national issue, and the innovative technologies need to be developed and focused on," he said, adding the coal sequestration and oil recovery are "the first of its kind of technologies in the world."

"It is very important to get support for preliminary planning."

Camp said he began meeting with officials responsible for development of the GLERP project – M&M Energy, including Chairman Mike Muckleroy and President Mike Sawruk – about three years ago. He is now excited to see the growth of the project and "steps being taken" to make the plans a reality. On the statewide level, Muckleroy and Sawruk have been working closely with legislators, including Senator Roger Kahn and Representative Paul Opsommer, to establish the legislative framework necessary to support the project. Camp said that is also a vital element.

“Senator Kahn and Representative Opsommer will be critical parts of this process. We need the support of the governor and administration at the state level and we all need to work as a team,” Camp said.

Kahn and Opsommer, along with other state legislators and members of the House and Senate Energy and Technology committees, have been working to develop legislation that supports the concept. Both leaders have stated their support and expect gains to be made in the legislative process in coming months in the form of House and Senate bills. Camp said such efforts will continue at the state and federal levels.

“We continue to strategize to find ways to get cooperation from state and federal officials to support the project,” he said, adding other sources of funding are expected in the forms of grants and energy funds.

The bill granting the \$500,000 to the GLERP project still must be passed at the national Senate level, and Camp reminded it is “just one step among many.”

“In a long journey comes many steps,” he said.

The next step is to ensure the project “stays on the radar” for the Michigan Department of Energy so it remains fresh on the minds of legislators and continues to earn funding. Development of the project “has the potential to create significant economic development and prosperity in the mid Michigan region,” he said, and is worth strong political support.

“The jobs created with construction and the location are very important to the area. This project would create an important energy source for Gratiot County, the region and the entire state.”

Camp also stated he is pleased the House has recognized the importance of the GLERP, calling it “an exciting project that could have a major impact on the future of our state and our nation.”