

# MORNING SUN

Volume 30, Issue 273

Mt. Pleasant and Alma, Mich.

TheMorningSun.com

Monday, December 3, 2007 50¢

## Critics target coal plans

By LINDA GITTLEMAN  
Gratiot Managing Editor

When it comes to coal plants, complaints of “Not in my back yard,” aren’t heard that much in Alma.

In fact, a great deal of talk and plans center on what the area will need when the proposed energy research park would open.

The park would include an integrated gas combined cycle coal plant

(IGCC) with carbon and mercury capture technology, a clean coal operation that’s the first of its kind planned in the state.

The fact that the area would want any kind of a coal plant after all the pollution problems it has gone through surprises some, but not the folks who live in the county. They’ve been through too many economic upheavals with one plant closing fol-

lowing another not to get interested in new and badly needed job opportunities.

In 1962, Rachel Carson’s book, “Silent Spring” helped to usher in the era of environmental awareness and scored a direct hit in St. Louis, leaving it holding a big bag - the Superfund site.

Along the way the community learned a thing or two and one of the

things it learned is that it has to be green. An IGCC, with CO2 sequestration in large part fit the bill.

Now it seems, some state environmental groups are lining up to oppose any and all new coal plants, while others, recognizing an IGCC provides a new, clean technology, are offering support but only under certain conditions.

(See Coal, Page 2A)

# Coal

(Continued from Page 1A)

Some environmentalists in the state believe that Michigan can succeed using wind and solar power as renewable resources and have set a goal that those renewable sources will supply 20 percent of the state's energy needs by the year 2020.

"It's viable but it's extremely difficult," said Murray Borrello, geology professor at Alma College and a member of the task force, adding that he believes 20 percent is the best it could get.

But even if the state can accomplish its goal, where is the rest of it - 80 percent - coming from? Other states?

There are other options, Borrello said: Nuclear power and fuel cells to name two, but the world's uranium will likely be used up in 20 years, and fuel cells are at least 40 years away from any serious implementation.

"There's nothing else right now," he said. "There is no single source that can supply all our needs. It doesn't exist."

Coal, on the other hand, is

relatively cheap and plentiful. There is enough coal in the U.S. to last at least another 200 years, according to some estimates, 250 years according to others.

Coal is very, very hard to ignore as a source of energy.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology issued a report last spring, called "The Future of Coal - Options for a Carbon Constrained World."

In that report by professors in chemistry, physics and engineering systems, it stated that "carbon capture and sequestration is the critical enabling technology to help reduce carbon dioxide emissions significantly while also allowing coal to meet the world's pressing energy needs."

So far, an IGCC is the the number one choice today, the report stated, but it did not rule out future developments. New coal plants, it continued, without CO2 capture should not be "grandfathered and granted emissions allowances in the event of future regulation," calling that a perverse incentive to

build dirty coal plants.

Of at least five coal plants being planned in Michigan, Alma's is the only IGCC.

But oil is also a huge factor in the energy park.

Borrello said that if hasn't already, oil will peak in the next few years. That means it's downhill from here on out. There will never be as much oil as there is now, prices will never be the same as they are now, and people will remember "the good old days" when a barrel of oil was "only \$100."

Energy park developer Mike Sawruk said he believes oil has already peaked.

The CO2 captured in an IGCC would be used to retrieve the billion barrels of oil still in the state and developers are eyeing the enormous profits to be made.

And, so is the state.

Legislators in Lansing lit up last spring when they heard of the proposed revenues the state would receive from the process.

And that, according to Alma College Professor Ed Lorenz, a member of the Pine River Task Force and the Sierra Club, is what allows "the prize" to come to Alma - the research part of the park.

"It's what we need - high end energy research," he said. "Our economy is negative and our only response is innovation. We have to do something, we have to try something."

Nearly everyone - businessmen, state legislators, environmental activists - believe legislation and/or an energy policy will be issued from the governor's office early next year. Whether it will be as comprehensive as the environmentalists wish isn't clear. Increasingly, with all the data from the federal government and private studies that outline the threat from greenhouse gasses, it would appear that an IGCC would be a critical part of the policy and legislation.

For that, however, it's wait and see.

HOLIDAY  
CONDITIONS  
BEGIN  
AT  
SEÑORITA

MONDAY'S  
KIDS NIGHT  
Pasta \$9.99 Kids \$2.99  
Jews the Clown  
5:00pm - 7:00pm

Check out  
the  
Classifieds

DOWNTOWN  
MT. PLEASANT  
Shop, Eat and Play!  
WWW.DOWNTOWNMP.COM

Extended Hours  
Until Christmas

Sundays 12noon-4pm  
Monday-Friday until 7pm  
Saturday until 5pm