



OUR VIEW: Illinois sites clear another hurdle in FutureGen race

By the JG/T-C Editorial Board

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The FutureGen Alliance, it was announced earlier this month, is on track to make public its final site selection by the end of the year.

In the running with Mattoon and Tuscola are Odessa and Jewett in Texas. It's a horse race.

The proposed power plant, an experiment, holds great promise as a blueprint for the clean use of coal. Success in sequestering carbon dioxide emissions from burning coal thousands of feet under ground could pave the way for construction of many such plants in the United States.

Illinois would be in a strong position to land more such plants, given its rich deposits of coal, plentiful water and skilled workers, if FutureGen settled here.

In the past few weeks, several other states have endorsed Mattoon and Tuscola's bid for the new facility.

U.S. Representatives Tim Johnson, John Shimkus and Jerry Costello recently announced the U.S. Department of Energy found "...all four alternative sites to be acceptable."

The finality of the expected December decision will be rolled back if a seismic survey finds flaws in the chosen site. Landowners in the vicinity of the proposed FutureGen plant — at all four finalist sites — are being asked to allow the seismic surveys.

A total of 430 landowners in Illinois in areas near Mattoon and Tuscola are being asked to give leeway for the tests. Requests for permission are also being sent to landowners near the Odessa and Jewett sites in Texas. Landowners will be paid \$5 per acre.

The request permits are part of an overall effort to place the selection process in automatic mode to push forward when the decision is announced by FutureGen, according to Angela Griffin, Coles Together president.

It's another sign that science is the key factor in selection of the FutureGen site, which is how it should be for such an important project.

Performing the seismic 3-D survey involves placing a grid pattern of microphones 660 feet apart, which trigger vibrations in the ground. These are recorded and will determine, with precision, if flaws exist, and where they are.

We remain confident that either Mattoon or Tuscola will land the new plant, based on the fact that both locations contain all the ingredients necessary to the success of this ground-breaking project.

We're hoping sometime late this year, or early next, we'll be able to pop the cork on this exquisite wine.

Whatever happens, the area remains a viable contender for all kinds of economic development. We have all the resources, including two powerful intellectual magnets — Lake Land College and Eastern Illinois University.

We have fine school systems, excellent roads, solid business communities, a deep and competent work force and plenty of natural resources among our attributes.

We await the final decision with confidence.

— JG/T-C Editorial Board