

Journal & Gazette Times - Courier

OUR VIEW: Rally a preview of real celebration

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We look at Sunday's FutureGen pep rally as a final tuneup for the real thing — celebrating the selection of Mattoon or Tuscola as the site for the \$1.5 billion power plant.

The communities of Mattoon and Tuscola, in conjunction with State of Illinois officials, are staging a "Bringing FutureGen Home" pep rally Sunday in Arcola.

The 2 p.m. pep rally offers one more opportunity for area residents to show their support for the project that is important to the local economy and to the future of the world.

Before Christmas, the FutureGen Alliance is expected to announce which of four communities will house the first-of-its-kind coal-fueled, near-zero emissions power plant.

Mattoon and Tuscola are competing against Jewett and Odessa in Texas for the plant which may determine the long-range viability of coal as a source for power.

After 20 months of learning about FutureGen's objectives and requirements, we are more convinced than ever that this is the best spot for the experimental project.

FutureGen is a public-private partnership involving several countries to build a first-of-its-kind coal-fueled, near-zero emissions power plant. The FutureGen plant will use cutting-edge technologies to generate electricity while capturing and permanently storing carbon dioxide deep beneath the earth.

The plant will also produce hydrogen and byproducts for possible use by other industries.

It's an exciting concept. Illinois and the world has plenty of coal as a power source but the release of carbon dioxide into the air from burning coal is a major contributor to the greenhouse gas effect.

Instead of emitting carbon dioxide into the air through traditional smokestacks, FutureGen's carbon dioxide will be sent down into the earth where it will be stored thousands of feet below the surface.

East-Central Illinois has the proper geologic formation for sequestering the gas while this state and the Midwest has plenty of coal to burn in the research and development project.

Geology and coal, we believe, are the two primary reasons why FutureGen is best suited to East-Central Illinois.

Governors of six other coal states are endorsing Illinois as the FutureGen site.

According to the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, those six states — Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Wyoming — plus Illinois produce two-thirds of the coal in the United States.

Illinois is centrally located, so transporting coal to Mattoon or Tuscola will be cheaper than hauling it to Texas.

Throughout the process we have been impressed with how the FutureGen Alliance has conducted its site search.

Science has been the top factor in winnowing the original list of 22 communities in about a dozen states vying for the project to 12 sites in six states to the final four sites.

Illinois' position is that the world needs FutureGen for future environmentally-friendly electrical power and that FutureGen needs Illinois because of our geology, coal, transportation, location and university research.

By selecting Illinois as the site for FutureGen, everybody wins.