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Ohio could win part of FutureGen project

Feds want partners to test ways to push coal-burning waste into underground pockets instead of into air.

By John Nolan

Staff Writer

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Ohio lost out in July in a nationwide competition to host FutureGen, a prototype for the coal-burning power plant of the future, but there could be a chance for the state to participate in research to support the project.

The U.S. Department of Energy plans in 2007 to choose partners to receive more than \$450 million in funding over 10 years to test methods of injecting carbon dioxide thousands of feet underground, rather than releasing that waste into the air as pollution from coal combustion.

The underground storage process, called carbon sequestration, would support development of FutureGen, a U.S. Department of Energy plant that is to start operating in 2012 and would burn coal with little or no air emissions to produce both electricity and hydrogen. A FutureGen site in Texas or Illinois is to be chosen next year.

If liquefied carbon dioxide can be successfully injected for long-term disposal in brine pockets within underground rock formations, it would benefit Ohio, which is home to coal reserves and 26 coal-burning power plants which contribute to air pollution, officials said. Dayton Power and Light Co., Duke Energy and other Ohio utilities are heavily dependent on coal for their electricity production.

"Ohio could be a player in this," said Joe Hager, a senior project scientist at the Edison Materials Technology Center in Kettering, a state-supported research organization.

"Being able to do something with that CO₂, rather than just release it into the air, would be very good for us," said Mark Shanahan, executive director of the Ohio Air Quality Development Authority.

Energy Department officials said Monday they plan to award funding of up to \$67 million per demonstration project, with 20 percent in matching funds to come from industries, universities and other partners in the research.

The grants could be awarded in April through regional research partnerships around the country, department spokesman Mike Jacobs said.

Shanahan said he hopes Ohio will get some of the federal funding through its partnership with six other states

from Maryland to Michigan. Universities and utilities in those states could support the research, which could start in 2008.

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