

COAL NEWS

NEW ZEALAND

Stringent conditions for Marsden B refit

After a 20 day hearing attracting more than 3000 submissions, a panel of four independent commissioners has granted approval for Mighty River Power's mothballed Marsden B Power Station to be refitted for coal firing. The conditions are some of the most stringent ever imposed in Australasia. In particular the maximum amount of mercury that can be released into the atmosphere above Bream Bay has been limited to 3kg a year. In its application to Whangarei District and Northland Regional Councils for 11 resource consents to convert the unused oil fired station to coal, Mighty River wanted consent to discharge 35kg of mercury a year from the 830,000 tonnes of coal it plans to burn at the station annually. Marsden B would annually release up to 2 million tonnes of CO₂ but greenhouse gas considerations have been removed from the Resource Management Act because they are covered by central government policy.

Recently it was announced that Mighty River Power is appealing against some of the conditions while appeals have also been lodged by Greenpeace and two community groups. Mighty River believes some of the conditions will unreasonably constrain the development of the power station, with little environmental benefit. It claims some of the discharge limits for mercury and other substances set by the commissioners are lower than the level of those contaminants in the existing environment. Mighty River is carrying out studies on the Bream Bay marine environment to support its appeal.

Database development to support exploration efforts

The Ministry of Economic Development (MED) has selected software supplier Landmark to develop a database which will provide free, online public access to exploration data. The initiative was a continuation of the strategy to increase exploration investment in New Zealand through improved understanding of its geological potential with greater volumes of geotechnical data.

The database would be used to house the new petroleum data that has been acquired and provide public access to all petroleum, coal and minerals exploration data acquired over the past 30 years through an easy to use web site portal. The system will allow explorers from any location throughout the world to search, review and assess vast quantities of data including exploration reports, geological and geophysical surveys and results from a wide range of drilling and other exploration activities. MED stated the announcement affirms its ongoing commitment to enhancing perceptions of New Zealand exploration potential.

Solid Energy unveils clean up plan for Stockton mine water run-off

Solid Energy is planning a multi-million dollar programme to improve the quality of water run-off from its key Stockton export coal mine near Westport. The company is seeking resource consents in October for key elements of the programme to improve water quality discharges from the opencast mine on the Stockton plateau.

Solid Energy plans a series of measures to improve the quality of water discharging into the Mangatini Stream, which flows into the Ngakawau River. These measures aim to reduce the amount of suspended solids (coarse sediment/dirt) in run-off from operational mining areas, and reduce the amount of fine coal particles (fines) through improvements to systems design and more efficient coal handling.

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Large-scale water treatment facilities will be built around the Mangatini Stream and its tributary, Ford Creek, which drain the area of the Stockton Plateau most impacted by coal fines from mining operations.

Coal seam gas

Solid Energy is investigating the extraction of methane trapped in deep coal seams of the North Huntly and Rotowaro coalfields. It believes there could be as much as 300 petajoules of gas in the seams. Solid Energy said 5 pilot wells will be sunk next year and a commercial decision could be made by early 2007.

Westech New Zealand, a wholly owned subsidiary of Energy Corporation of America (ECA) says it will begin a coal seam gas drilling campaign near Auckland early next year. The company will be drilling six new wells on petroleum exploration sites south of Hamilton, and between Hamilton and Auckland. ECA has also been exploring on the West Coast, in Hawke's Bay and Taranaki. ECA operates 5000 gas and oil wells in the United States – primarily in the Appalachian Basin and Gulf Coast regions -- and three in New Zealand.

Coal seam gas first attracted attention in the early 1990s in Otago and Southland, and reservoirs were found there in 1999 -- strategically located close to urban and industrial sites. The coal seam gas varies with different coal types, but is typically 90% methane with some carbon dioxide, hydrogen and heavier hydrocarbons.

NZOG's cornerstone projects

The NZ Oil and Gas share price rose 13% on news the company had found an Indian partner Saurashtra Fuels for its West Coast coal project on the Pike River. Saurashtra will inject \$17M for a 10.6% stake in the \$130M mine, implying a total company value of \$160M. Saurashtra is India's largest privately owned coke manufacturer. It will buy at least 150,000 tonnes annually of the low-ash coking coal at market prices over the life of the mine.

The Pike River coal mine is one of three cornerstone projects of NZOG. The others are the Kupe project off Taranaki, which will produce gas, light oil and LPG; and the Tui oil field offshore in north Taranaki, from which first oil could be produced by March 2007.

Solid Energy expands Buller exploration permit at Inangahua

Solid Energy has recently been awarded an expanded permit for coal exploration on the Inangahua coalfields near the Buller River on the West Coast. The permit was first issued in August 2004 and the area has now been increased to 1,286 ha.

The work programme involves completing 8 drill holes within 2 years of the commencement of the permit, and a further 20 holes within 3 years. Coal resource estimates and pre-feasibility mining studies will also be completed within the same period.

Minerals and coal exploration spending jumps 129% over the past year

Spending on 'greenfields' minerals and coal exploration by mining companies has risen dramatically in New Zealand over the past year. Total prospecting and exploration expenditure rose to \$20.4M for the year ended 31 March 2005 — an increase of 129% from the \$8.9M spent in the year to March 2004, the latest Crown Minerals statistics show.

In the 2002 calendar year, a total of 9 prospecting and 28 exploration permits were granted by Crown Minerals. This compares with 33 prospecting and 47 exploration permits in 2004. In the first half of 2005, a further 32 exploration permits were granted. Currently there are 50 prospecting and over 150 exploration permits on issue.

Glencoal awarded Central Otago coal prospecting permit

Glencoal Energy Ltd, a coalmining subsidiary of the large dairy cooperative Fonterra, has been granted a permit to prospect for lignite in Central Otago. The permit has been granted for an 18 month term and covers a 558 sq km area near the town of Ranfurly, in central Otago.

Glencoal predominantly operates coal permits in the Waikato area, where it mines sub-bituminous coal from its Kopako and Renown opencast mines. Most coal from these mines fuels dairy factories in the Waikato area. Among its South Island plants, Fonterra operates a large dairy processing plant at Clandeboye, north of Timaru, and has a five year contract with Solid Energy to supply coal from the Ohai mine in Southland.

Eastern acquires Cascade coal mine near Westport

Queensland-based energy company Eastern Corporation Ltd has completed purchase of the Cascade open cast coal mine near Westport. Eastern said that although Cascade is a small resource of approximately 1.5M tonnes, it is a profitable operation.

Cascade stated it provides high quality products – thermal coal for the domestic industry market and metallurgical coal for export. The resource comprises approximately 770,000 tonnes of measured, 112,000 tonnes of indicated and 600,000 tonnes of inferred resource. Strip ratios at Cascade are as low as 1:1 and the mine produces a unique, high quality coal with low ash, low sulphur, and high vitrinite content.

Marketing is targeted toward high value export sales combined with contracts to supply domestic markets. Most coal from the mine has been sold to the nearby Holcim cement works at Westport.

Coal extraction resumes at Spring Creek mine

Solid Energy has restarted coal extraction from its underground Spring Creek mine near Greymouth after a comprehensive review of development, and mining systems and practices. Under a 6-month mine plan approved through to the end of February 2006, coal is now being extracted by hydraulic monitor in “panel one”. The plan includes safety and productivity milestones, which are being monitored closely and reviewed weekly.

Progress will continue to be regularly measured against the development and production targets set out in the mine plan to ensure that the operation is sustainable and that it has a long term future.

Coal extraction at Spring Creek mine was suspended in November 2004 due to concerns about slow development rates and coal quality issues. Solid Energy has carried out a comprehensive review of development and mining systems and practices at the mine and implemented a number of initiatives to improve operational performance since then.

The mine has an estimated recoverable resource of more than 100M tonnes of premium coal within the Rapahoe sector of the Rewanui coal measures in the 1465 ha permit area.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Coal plants benefit from Greenhouse Abatement Scheme (Australia)

Two of Australia's coal fired power stations are making windfall gains from a NSW State Government scheme designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Greenhouse Abatement Scheme awards certificates to power plants and forestry groups which reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. They then sell these certificates on to energy retailers, which have to meet mandatory emissions targets set by the State Government.

Research by the University of NSW has found as much as 40% of the money will flow to other states, to projects such as the low efficiency Hazelwood power station in Victoria, and a new coal fired power plant being built in Queensland. About 95% of certificates issued are for projects that were running long before the scheme began in 2003.

Collie coal miners accept rescue package (Australia)

Hundreds of coal miners at Collie in Western Australia have voted to accept a rescue package for the industry. The package follows outrage over the State Government's choice of gas, rather than coal, to fuel the state's new power station. It includes a dedicated coal berth at the Bunbury port and infrastructure fund for the industry. The Government is also planning to include measures that will ensure the building of a new coal fired operation in WA.

Companies investing in coal seam gas (Australia)

A spate of new projects has highlighted Australia's keen interest in coal seam methane gas as an alternative fuel for power generation. Three Australian companies are seeking to tap government incentives that promote cleaner fuels while the companies are also developing alternatives to maturing, traditional gas sources such as the Cooper Basin in central Australia's outback.

The Australian Gas Light Co has entered a A\$93M joint venture arrangement with Sydney Gas Ltd to accelerate development of the latter's coal seam gas assets. Coal seam gas producer Arrow Energy NL and energy infrastructure company Alinta Limited signed a deal to build a 27.4MW gas fired power station in Queensland. Beach Petroleum Ltd said it would proceed with Arrow's ongoing gas exploration efforts in coal seams in Queensland's Surat Basin.

Australia, the world's largest coal exporter and one of the first countries to begin commercialisation of coal seam methane, has large coal deposits along the length of its eastern seaboard, with current government projections suggesting the resource can sustain production for the next 200 years.

USA helps fund coal fired power plant (Botswana)

Making strides in meeting the growing demand for electricity in southern Africa is the goal of a US Trade and Development Agency grant awarded to Botswana's Ministry of Minerals, Energy and Water Resources (MMEWR). As part of the economic development goals of the African Growth and Opportunity Act, the grant is designed to help Botswana consider the development of new energy sources in preparation for the projected spike in regional demand for power over the next few years. Specifically, the technical assistance will fund financial advisory services allowing the MMEWR to explore different ways of financing the "greenfield" Mmamabula coal fired power plant, which will be located next to the Mmamabula Colliery in the Mahalapye region of Botswana.

CVRD may import coal for power supply (Brazil)

Cia Vale do Rio Doce (CVRD), the world's No.1 iron ore miner, is studying using coal to supply energy because of environmental problems with hydroelectric power. CVRD, which has coal projects in Venezuela, China, Australia, Mongolia and Mozambique, could import the fossil fuel for its energy needs.

CVRD and its partners produce 2,000 MW, or 4.5% of Brazil's annual energy consumption. Out of this total, 800 MW is destined for the Albras aluminum smelter, controlled by CVRD, under a contract extending to 2024.

Xinjiang issues coal blueprint (China)

China's Xinjiang province wants to use its coal reserves, which are 40% of the national total, for power generation and to produce synthetic fuels from coal liquefaction plants. China is investing heavily in synthetic fuels to help cut back pollution from uncontrolled coal burning and to limit its reliance on foreign oil. Xinjiang's high quality coal made the province an ideal investment site for the large mining firms already exploring the technology.

101 new projects for coal production (India)

The Indian Government has identified 101 new projects to be taken up during the 10th Plan to increase the coal production to bridge the widening demand-supply gap. Out of these projects, 22 are already producing coal and 45 projects are slated for production during 2005-06 and 2006-7. A proposal for creating 71M tonnes additional capacity in 16 Coal India Ltd mines has been circulated to the concerned ministries/departments for comments.

APGenco to import coal (India)

Andhra Pradesh Power Generation Corporation (APGenco) is planning to import coal during the current financial year owing to the Indian Government's directions to power utilities due to the acute coal shortage being faced by the country.

APGenco officials said that the import volume for the year has been determined on the basis of internal assessment of supply-demand gap. With Singareni Collieries being controlled by the Andhra Pradesh government, most of its production is utilised in the state, especially in power generation. Coal consumption by APGenco is expected to come down this year as its thermal generation is expected to decrease by 2000-3000 million units because of additional hydro power generation.

Noble Group may buy two Indonesian coal mines (Indonesia)

Noble Group Ltd. may buy coal mines in Indonesia as the Hong Kong based commodities supplier seeks to accelerate its investment in the country. Indonesia is seeking to curb inflation and stem a flow of capital out of its economy (Southeast Asia's largest). Noble, which supplied 10% of China's iron ore imports last year, is adding new businesses to grab a larger share of trade in raw materials.

Plans for coal fired electricity plant (Sri Lanka)

Sri Lanka will build its first coal fired power plant, as the government tries to cut fuel costs and meet electricity demand spurred by a ceasefire in its 20-year civil war. Construction of the plant at Norocholai, north of the capital of Colombo will start in the first quarter. The plant will produce 300 MW by 2010 and as much as 900 MW as demand rises.

Sri Lanka is opting for a coal fired plant as oil prices surge. The island gets about 65% of its electricity from oil fired plants and imports all the fuel it needs to run them. The nation has been unable to increase hydropower because of a lack of rain catchment areas and reservoirs.

Second deep pit to close (UK)

UK Coal announced plans to mothball its second deep mine this year. UK Coal says its site at Rossington, near Doncaster, South Yorkshire, will go the same way as the Harworth mine in Nottinghamshire and close early next year.

UK Coal also revealed in February that Ellington Colliery in Northumberland was closing because of flooding. Rossington employs more than 300 people, while there are 400 working at Harworth, a number of whom the company hopes to redeploy at its other sites around the country.

Blair signs 'clean coal' deal with China (UK)

The British prime minister, Tony Blair, has signed a deal on behalf of the EU with China, granting the emerging superpower technology for clean, coal fired power stations. The deal, which was widely expected, came as part of a joint declaration on climate change between the emerging economic giant and Europe.

The "clean coal" technology will employ carbon capture and storage technology so that a coal plant can retain its own CO₂ emissions, burying it in porous rock underground for long term storage. The agreement will include cooperation on the development, deployment and transfer of low carbon technology, including advanced near-zero-emissions coal technology, through carbon capture and storage.

EPA proposes change to pollution rule for coal-fired plants (USA)

The Environmental Protection Agency announced a new move to modify a federal air pollution rule that some electric utilities and President George W. Bush's administration have fought to change. The provision, known as New Source Review, requires owners of coal burning power plants to install modern pollution controls if changes in the facilities result in increased air pollution. The EPA's proposal would allow the utilities to increase overall pollution from the coal fired plants without having to install new controls, provided that hourly rates of pollution are not increased.

The proposal will encourage installation of new, innovative technologies that promote greater energy efficiency and reliability at US power plants. Edison Electric Institute, a power company trade association, said the regulations would eliminate regulatory uncertainty, which would discourage companies from improving plants' efficiency and even routine maintenance.

Peabody joins effort to build near-zero-emissions coal plant (USA)

Peabody Energy is among seven electric and coal companies that formed an alliance to work with the federal government to build a near-zero emissions, coal based power plant. The FutureGen Industrial Alliance will work with the U.S. Department of Energy to design, build and operate the world's first electricity and hydrogen production plant. The 275 MW plant will use advanced, coal based technology to generate electricity and produce hydrogen to power fuel cells for transportation and other energy needs.

In addition to Peabody, the seven initial companies in the alliance include: American Electric Power of Columbus, Ohio; BHP Billiton of Melbourne, Australia; Consol Energy Inc. of Pittsburgh; Foundation Coal Corp. of Linthicum Heights, Md.; Kennecott Energy Co. of Gillette, Wyo.; and Southern Co. of Atlanta.

Montana's Governor eyes coal to solve US fuel costs (USA)

Montana's Governor wants to solve America's rising energy costs using a technology discovered in Germany 80 years ago that converts coal into gasoline, diesel and aviation fuel. The Fischer-Tropsch technology, discovered by German researchers in 1923, was not economical as long as oil cost less than US\$30/barrel.

The Governor estimated the cost of producing a barrel of oil through the Fischer-Tropsch method at \$32, and said that with its 120 billion tons of coal -- a little less than a third of the US total -- Montana could supply the entire United States with its aviation, gas and diesel fuel for 40 years without creating environmental damage. An entry level Fischer-Tropsch plant producing 22,000 barrels/day would cost about \$1.5 billion.

TECHNOLOGY

CO₂ Capture and Storage (CCS) Seminar, Wellington

The Coal Association is hosting a seminar on CO₂ Capture and Storage Technologies at the InterContinental Wellington on December 6, 2005. The two speakers are Dr Peter Cook, Chief Executive of the Australian Cooperative Research Centre for Greenhouse Gas Technologies and Dr Tony Espie, Senior Reservoir Engineer, BP Exploration. Dr Cook will give an Australian and international perspective on geosequestration as a CO₂ mitigation option and will describe the Australian approach to greenhouse gas mitigation, focusing on CCS technologies and compare and contrast this with what is happening and what might happen internationally. Dr Espie will provide some information on the status of the EU CCS technology development programme then cover BP's programme on CCS e.g. corporate position, CCS technology development and deployment programme. For more details go to <http://www.cleancoal.org.nz/main.php?page=1014>

New Commercial CCS Projects Announced

BP, ConocoPhillips, Shell and Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE), have announced that they are to commence engineering design for an industrial scale project to generate 'carbon-free' electricity from hydrogen in Scotland. The planned project will convert natural gas to hydrogen and carbon dioxide gases, then use the hydrogen gas as fuel for a 350 MW power station, and export the carbon dioxide to a North Sea oil reservoir for increased oil recovery and ultimate storage.

When fully operational, the project would be expected to capture and store around 1.3 million tonnes of carbon dioxide each year and provide 'carbon-free' electricity to the equivalent of a quarter of a million UK homes.

BP, with its partners Sonatrach and Statoil, also operates the In Salah geological storage project in Algeria that is storing approximately one million tonnes a year of carbon dioxide in a gas reservoir. Oil and gas reservoirs are geological formations, often kilometres below the earth's surface, that have held oil, natural gas, and sometimes carbon dioxide trapped for millions of years in capped sandstone.

Carbon capture could be mainstream by 2050

A new report from the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change shows up to 40% of the world's fossil fuel emissions could be captured and stored underground by 2050. The report suggests carbon sequestration could play a major role in reducing the threat of global warming but won't really come into its own until the second half of this century. The report says if carbon capture is exploited via hundreds of thousands of storage sites around the world, it could make up to 55% of projected cuts in greenhouse gas emissions needed to offset climate change by 2100. The downside is carbon capture would be costly and would probably need government backing.

The report estimates the price needs to be US\$25-35/tonne CO₂ to make carbon capture technologies commercially viable. CO₂ is currently trading on the EU market at US\$21.40/tonne although this is not generally seen as a good guide to future prices. Costs could be slightly lower if CO₂ is injected into oilfields, helping raise pressure to force more oil to the surface. The report estimates the world could stash some 2000 billion tonnes of CO₂ underground using current technologies. Energy production globally now produces about 14 billion tonnes of CO₂ annually, so there's potentially room for more than a century's worth of emissions underground.

Solid Energy has welcomed the new report and believes New Zealand is well placed for CO₂ storage, with old oil and gas fields such as Maui and Kapuni likely potential reservoirs. The company's research manager believes the technology is "less than 10 years away" to make carbon capture and storage viable on a wide scale, depending on the cost. Solid Energy is a partner in a \$12.2M trans-Tasman project to explore CO₂ sequestration options, including a pilot gas field storage project in Australia due to start soon and continue for 6 years.

Australian Low Emission Technology Demonstration Fund

The Australian coal industry welcomed in October the formal launch of the Low Emission Technology Demonstration Fund. The Australian Coal Association (ACA) stated "The fund is a major boost to Australian efforts to develop the technologies required to achieve deep cuts in greenhouse gas emissions." The fund is a A\$500M merit based grants programme originally foreshadowed in the Government's Energy White Paper in June 2004. It aims to support the demonstration of new energy technologies or processes or the application of overseas technologies or processes to Australian circumstances to deliver long term large scale greenhouse gas emission reductions. "It will also complement the efforts of the participants in the COAL21 programme who are already working collaboratively towards the objective of reducing and ultimately eliminating greenhouse gas emissions from coal fired power generation," according to the ACA.

Australian-USA coal gasification project

Syntroleum Corp. has agreed to develop a coal-to-oil project with Australia's Linc Energy Pty. Ltd. The company's agreement calls for them to use Syntroleum's proprietary air based Fischer-Tropsch technology and Linc Energy's underground coal gasification (UCG) technology at Linc Energy's ongoing Chinchilla coal project in Queensland.

The UCG process involves injecting air and steam into an underground coal seam through boreholes and igniting the coal in situ. The coal seam is gasified and hot product gas containing the key feedstock for power generation or synthetic gas is produced via a second series of boreholes.

The UCG synthetic gas, which undergoes sulfur removal and additional conditioning at the surface, resembles synthetic gas obtained from conventional surface coal gasification systems but costs far less. The coal derived synthetic gas is burned in gas turbines to produce power or is used as feedstock for reactors and refining processes to make it "ultra-clean".

EVENTS

CO₂ Capture and Storage Technologies seminar, 6 December, InterContinental, Wellington, NZ. For more details see text above or go to <http://www.cleancoal.org.nz/main.php?page=1014>

5th annual coal seam gas and coal methane conference Brisbane, Qld., Australia, 1-2 Dec 2005 IBC Conferences, GPO Box 2728, Sydney, NSW 2001, Australia Tel: +61 2 9080 4307 Fax: +61 2 9290 3844 Email: enquiries@informa.com.au Internet: www.theajmonline.com

McCloskey's Australian coal outlook 2005 Sydney, NSW, Australia, 5-6 Dec 2005 Georgina Lucey, The McCloskey Group, PO Box 15, Petersfield, Hampshire, GU32 3HX, UK Tel: +44 1730 265 095 Fax: +44 1730 260 044 Email: georgina.lucey@mccloskeycoal.com

McCloskey's 15th Asian coal conference 2006 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 21-22 Feb 2006 Georgina Lucey, The McCloskey Group, PO Box 15, Petersfield, Hampshire, GU32 3HX, UK Tel: +44 1730 265 095 Fax: +44 1730 260 044 Email: georgina.lucey@mccloskeycoal.com

15th international coal preparation congress & exhibition: designing for the environment Beijing, China, 17-20 Oct 2006 Ms. Sun Jiaohua, Department of International Cooperation, China National Coal Association, 21 Hepingli Beijie, Beijing 100713, China Email: sjiaohua@chinasafety.gov.cn

World energy congress Rome, Italy, 9-15 Nov 2007 Mike Treacher, PennWell UK Office, PennWell House, Horseshoe Hill, Upshire Essex EN9 3SR, UK Tel: +44 1992 656 636 Fax: +44 1992 656 700 Email: miket@penwell.com Internet: www.rome2007.it

FEEDBACK

*This e-Newsletter is published for the Coal Association of New Zealand Inc. by CRL Energy Ltd.
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