

COAL NEWS

NEW ZEALAND

Huge lignite resources under close examination

The huge size and possible uses of New Zealand's lignite resources in Southland and Otago came under close examination at the recent New Zealand Minerals Conference. New Zealand's coal resources, mostly consisting of lignite, are significant on a world scale and on a per capita basis the total coal resources are immense.

New Zealand ranked a clear second in the world for the amount of coal available per head of population. With about 2,500 tonnes of coal per head, New Zealand ranked second only to Australia. The country with the world's largest coal resources, the USA, holds only a third as much coal resource per person as New Zealand.

The Centre for Advanced Engineering stated that current estimates of South Island mining costs are \$1.0 to \$3.0 a gigajoule making these resources amongst the most competitively priced energy sources available worldwide. The value would only be captured if New Zealand began to envisage a world scale, long life, integrated and multi-faceted development sized to world markets for chemicals or fuels. With new technology and the increasing emergence of gasification, the possibilities for lignite coals have expanded, particularly for use in industrial cogeneration applications. Coal gasification affords the diversity to produce commodities such as liquid fuels, chemicals, fertilisers and methanol, as well as generating electricity from excess gas and heat.

Ashers-Waituna assessed as best lignite deposit

At the NZ Minerals Conference, Mike Isaac, general manager of GNS Science's natural resources group, said that geology and coal quantity estimates were known for 12 of the 13 major lignite deposits (eight of them on the Southland plains). Dr Isaac said the best of these deposits for mining is likely to be Ashers-Waituna in southern Southland. It has been modelled for production of 12.1 Mtonnes a year over 30 years. But he said the pit model to maximum depth of 80 m was not the best part of the deposit with an additional resource beyond the "30 year" pit. The resource with less than 150 m cover was 1,235 Mtonnes.

More positive about Spring Creek mine

Solid Energy is taking a more positive view of its large underground Spring Creek coal mine, reporting that daily production targets are being exceeded and exploration drilling is now planned to prove new resources. The company said that it has commenced a \$1.2M drilling programme to prove coal resources which could extend the life of the Spring Creek mine by 5 years.

A further 12-month mine plan for development and extraction through to February 2007 has now been approved. Under the new plan coal extraction will commence in a previously developed area of the mine, known as panel 2, and coal development and extraction will take place in panel 3. Exploration drilling undertaken last year identified up to 2 Mtonnes of predominantly thermal coal in very thick seams to the west of the mine's southern working area, which could be extracted by hydraulic mining.

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NZ participates in Aussie project to lock CO₂ underground

Solid Energy is a founding shareholder with several Australian coal, oil and gas companies in a trial project to store carbon dioxide underground. The trial of CO₂ sequestration technology is being led by Australia's Cooperative Research Centre for Greenhouse Gas Technologies (CO₂CRC), which has funding of about A\$140 M over 7 years.

Its pilot research project, to be operated by a new company, will start later this year at a cost of around A\$30 M. Solid Energy, Genesis Energy and GNS Science have invested several million in finding a way to bury unwanted CO₂ produced when fossil fuels are burned.

Under the CRC programme, the Australian Government matches research funding dollar for dollar, including the investment from the three NZ companies. The initial test will be in Western Victoria, and will simulate the capture of carbon dioxide from a power station, and its transport by pipeline to be stored about 2km beneath the Earth's surface. The behaviour of the stored CO₂ will be monitored using sophisticated techniques that can detect and track the gas in deep geological formations.

Solid Energy Research Manager, Dr Tim Moore, says: "CO₂ occurs naturally in the same types of rock formations we are targeting for geosequestration. These natural situations help us understand how CO₂ will behave when stored underground. It is also likely that CO₂ can be very effectively stored in many of our deep, unmineable coal seams. CO₂ is compressed and injected into the rock layers or coal seams, and in many cases helps to displace natural gas which can be captured and used at the same time. Eventually the CO₂ storage site is sealed and a monitoring system is set up. The stability of storing CO₂ in this manner may even improve as the CO₂ tends to go into solution in formation water over time rather than break back into a gas. Therefore, as time progresses, it becomes even more stable".

Pike River decision means upgrade for Greymouth port

Grey District Mayor Tony Kokshoorn has described a \$20M redevelopment of Greymouth's port as part of an economic renaissance for the area. Pike River Coal Company (PRCC) said in December it had agreed on a long term transport contract for the shipment of up to 1.3 Mtonnes a year of coking coal from stockpiles at its new mine north of Greymouth. West Coast Coal, a consortium of Port Taranaki, TNL Group and shipping operators Wendell Group and Jepsens International, will truck the coal from the mine to Greymouth where it will be loaded on to purpose built shallow draught coastal vessels for shipment to the Port of Taranaki. The plan calls for significant redevelopment of both ports.

Kokshoorn said the mine and associated port redevelopment was "the biggest thing around here for 100 years without a doubt". The mine was expected to employ 110 workers, with "hundreds more" jobs created downstream. This was especially welcome on the West Coast because declining coal mining and logging activity have resulted in its population falling from about 40,000 in the late sixties to about 30,000 a year ago. "When Maui gas was discovered in Taranaki in the sixties that spelled the end of our coal industry here. But the fact that Maui gas is running out and that China and India are cranking up big time means coal's back in vogue. All of a sudden, it's not a dirty word any more, so we get a rebirth down here," said Kokshoorn.

The Grey District Council planned to form a partnership with West Coast Coal to run the redeveloped port. Kokshoorn said the planned \$20M redevelopment included \$7M on replacing wharves and the same amount on coal handling and stockpiling infrastructure, including dust mitigation.

Safety 'priority' in West Coast mines

Mine accidents similar to the West Virginia disaster that recently killed 11 miners after a gas explosion are preventable, according to Solid Energy's chief executive. Don Elder said the accident was a tragedy, but such accidents should not happen if safety measures were followed. "I wouldn't want anybody to infer from this that this sort of thing could happen on the West Coast without warning or unexpectedly. It is very rare for things to happen underground without warning." If methane increased quickly but remained within safe levels, work at Solid Energy mines stopped and the area was sealed off. "There have been times when we have had orderly evacuations. We needed to do some work and would evacuate and go back in. I don't recall anything I'd class as an emergency evacuation."

Dr Elder said ventilation technology had changed enormously. An Australian expert spent 6 months in 2005 monitoring methane levels at Spring Creek mine, using previously unused computer models. The mine was closed for economic reasons and reopening delayed because of problems with methane and until improved fans were installed.

Chief executive of Roa Mining Company Brent Francis said he would follow the inquiry into the US accident. Gas emissions had never been a problem at the Roa Mine, near Blackball, since it opened an underground section in 1999. "Gas exists, but we monitor and ventilate it properly. It's an issue we have to manage. It's down to mine planning. You plan and know what gas levels are," stated Mr Francis.

New Zealand Mines Rescue member Don Ladner said New Zealand mines were highly regulated. "Safety precautions have been written in blood. We can be very, very thankful in New Zealand our safety precautions are very high. Our safety is never compromised for production."

4WD recreational track opened on Denniston Plateau

A recreational 4-wheel drive track has been opened on public conservation land on the Denniston Plateau, Buller, in a joint initiative between the Department of Conservation, Solid Energy New Zealand and the Buller 4WD Club. The Denniston 4WD Loop Track is an 11 km round trip journey on rugged tracks which were originally created years ago for coal exploration. Most of the 4WD track is through a sub-alpine native environment, with stunning views over the Tasman Sea. The wild and dramatic plateau is home to a range of low growing alpine plants which have adapted to the harsh environment, along with a range of native wildlife. The track also passes close to the former Sullivan West and Sullivan Mine sites, currently being rehabilitated by Solid Energy and which feature historical mining relics.

Solid Energy proposed the 4WD track as part of the site rehabilitation, carrying out minor earthworks at track junctions to delineate the route. Off track 4WD activities which can damage habitats and species or erode the landscape are prohibited and could lead to a ban on all vehicles on the plateau to prevent further damage. Access to the track is through a locked gate controlled by the Department of Conservation.

High Court rejects appeal on Cypress Opencast Mine

Solid Energy welcomed a recent High Court decision rejecting all grounds of Forest and Bird's appeal against the Environment Court's grant of consents to develop and undertake mining at the planned Cypress Opencast Mine in the Buller. Detailed planning and preparation work is now underway to enable development to start on site. In June 2005, the Environment Court upheld a decision by the West Coast Regional and Buller District Councils to grant consents for the proposed mine subject to a comprehensive set of conditions that represented the outcomes of negotiations with a number of interested parties, including the Department of Conservation and Ngakawau Riverwatch. The Environment Court decision was appealed on points of law by Forest and Bird and the Buller Conservation Group.

Solid Energy's plan is to progressively mine 5 Mtonnes of coal over 10 years at Cypress. As part of the development a 17 hectare fully fenced predator controlled habitat will be created to protect a native snail species. Solid Energy will relocate as many live snails into the area as possible. Solid Energy also propose relocating ten great spotted kiwi from the mining site and undertaking predator control in a 1,000 hectare area of conservation estate near the mine.

Solid Energy has also applied for a wildlife permit to move a number of snails by hand and by 'direct transfer' before starting to mine the Mt Augustus ridge of the Stockton Opencast Mine, even though the company's own legal advice was that it has all the permissions necessary under the Coal Mines Act. Direct transfer is the precise excavation, removal and placement by a hydraulic excavator or face shovel of vegetation and the attached soil.

Carbon tax too costly

The New Zealand Government has abandoned plans to introduce a carbon tax after deciding it would not cut emissions enough to justify the cost of its introduction. The decision not to implement the carbon tax followed a whole of government review of climate change policy, which the Government called for in June. Officials have been asked to undertake further policy work, in consultation with stakeholders, due to be reported back to ministers in March. This policy work will include incentivising investment in renewable energy, improving fuel efficiency of the transport fleet, encouraging new tree planting and reducing deforestation. Policies linked to the carbon tax, such as Negotiated Greenhouse Agreements for major energy users and emitters, are likely to be retained in some form. Industry representatives are generally relieved there is no announcement (yet) of a move towards emissions trading because of the many allocation problems and the likelihood it will be nearly as costly as a tax (perhaps even more so, according to one Australian study).

Briefing papers warn of gas shortfall

The Ministry of Economic Development (MED) outlined the potential problem of a gas shortfall between 2010 and 2014 in its briefing papers to the Energy Minister. A gas shortage would mainly affect power companies that produce electricity using gas. New Zealand either had to discover new reserves of gas within the next two to three years or further encourage coal resource development or be able to implement alternatives. Although importing liquefied natural gas (LNG) was a decision for power companies, the papers say policy matters would involve the Government. Energy companies would need to make a large capital investment and would have to commit to importing substantial volumes of gas. Companies might therefore ask the Government for a financial underwrite.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Chinese demand to boost coal port (Australia)

Newcastle port in NSW is forecasting a 9.6% rise in shipments this year amid continuing demand from Asia. Port Waratah Coal Services, which runs the two coal terminals at Newcastle, forecast exports of 88 Mtonnes in the year ending December 31 up from 80.3 Mtonnes last year.

Coal exports from Australia have surged as China cut shipments, boosting demand from other suppliers. Almost 90% of the coal shipped through Newcastle last year was thermal coal, used for power generation, which is produced in the Hunter Valley by miners such as Rio Tinto Group, Xstrata Plc and BHP Billiton.

Eskom eyes coal to up supply to power stations (South Africa)

Eskom said it might develop coal mines to increase supply to its power stations. The company, which currently buys more than 100 Mtonnes of coal a year from companies was seeking consultants to advise on new projects.

Eskom is in the process of evaluating alternative coal sources for possible supplies to its power stations. South Africa's existing power generation capacity would be exceeded by demand from 2007. The economy expanded at an annual rate of 4.2% in the third quarter of last year and grew 4.5% in 2004, the fastest rate in 20 years. Eskom generates about 42,000 MW_e.

SK Corp. wins coal deal in Australia (South Korea)

SK Corp., South Korea's largest oil refiner, and state-run Korea Resources Corp. won approval for coal exploration in Queensland. The two companies will secure final exploration rights for the Taroborah coal mine after submitting an exploration plan. The deposit is estimated to hold about 300 Mtonnes of soft coal. It will be the country's first fully owned project in Australia.

The government hopes the project could lead to approval for other development rights and raise the country's self-sufficiency in the coal industry from 69.9 Mtonnes, or 22% of demand, to 88.3 Mtonnes, or 27%, by 2008. Korea is aiming to supply 35% of its own demand, or roughly 94 Mtonnes, by 2013. The two companies plan to complete exploration by 2009 and begin developing the mine in 2012. The coal will be used for power plants.

Excel signs coal supply contracts (Taiwan)

The Wambo coal mine in the NSW Hunter Valley has signed a contract with a power company in Taiwan to supply 3 Mtonnes of coal over the next 6 years. Mine owner Excel Coal has also signed another contract to supply international trading group Cargill with almost 2 Mtonnes of coal over the next 3 years.

Kiwira Mines gets \$6M to boost coal, power output (Tanzania)

Tanzania's only functioning colliery, Kiwira Coal Mines in Mbeya region, is to produce more electricity after the injection of new investments into the plant. Most of the infrastructure at the mine is in a dilapidated state and new machinery needs to be installed to improve coal production. Apart from boosting coal production, this will also enhance the generation of power for the national grid.

Most of the machinery would be used for underground operations and new districts will start producing coal once the machinery is installed. The next priority will be to work on the wash plant and power station, which have also been neglected for a long time.

Nexant sees promising opportunities for using coal as feedstock for commodity chemicals (USA)

The chemical industry appears to be at a strategic turning point that augurs well for the use of coal to produce chemicals. This shift is due to four key trends:

- Unprecedented increases in global crude oil prices
- Explosive increases in natural gas prices in North America and Western Europe
- Unprecedented energy demand growth in developing economies, particularly in Asia and for liquid transportation fuels
- Advances in coal utilisation processes, such as gasification, and related environmental technologies.

A new Nexant study, "Coal-to-Chemicals: Is It Coal's Time Again?", analyses the technologies and economics of utilising coal to produce major petrochemicals via gasification and other known "on-purpose" processes. The growth in coal based production of chemicals will ultimately be dependent on cost competitiveness; both for gasification based production and for chemicals produced from acetylene, as in the case of the growing vinyl chloride production in China.

Consol Energy secures long term coal contract (USA)

Consol Energy Inc. and American Electric Power have agreed to a new coal supply contract that will provide up to 82.5 Mtonnes of high energy content bituminous coal to various American Electric Power (AEP) coal fired power stations over a 15-year period beginning in 2007 and running through 2021. The coal will come from Consol Energy's McElroy and Shoemaker mines near Moundsville, West Virginia, and will be supplied to AEP plants that currently have, or will be retrofitted to have, flue gas desulfurisation scrubbers.

As a result of the new contract, Consol Energy will begin a major capital improvement project for the Shoemaker Mine. The project will replace the mine's older, underground rail haulage system with a new, more efficient conveyor belt haulage system. The project, which is scheduled to be completed in 2009, is expected to improve productivity at the mine and increase the mine's capacity from approximately 4 Mtonnes per year to approximately 6 Mtonnes.

TECHNOLOGY & OTHER NEWS

International endorsement of CCS

Carbon capture and storage (CCS) has received significant endorsement from the Intergovernment Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the European Commission, Australian federal and state Ministers, and Britain's Chief Scientist who says it is now the only way to avoid "catastrophic climate change". Capturing and storing the carbon dioxide produced by power plants and factories before it enters the atmosphere could play a major role in minimising climate change, according to the IPCC's report released in Montreal. The report said many components of CCS technology are already mature, including several applications that inject the gas into geological formations.

It said while the available storage capacity in geological reservoirs is likely to be sufficient, the true amount is yet uncertain. This is particularly so in regions which are experiencing rapid economic growth, such as South and East Asia. "Since emissions of carbon dioxide – the most important cause of climate change – continue to rise in many parts of the world, it is vital that we exploit every available option for reducing their impact on the global climate," added the UN World Meteorological Organization.

According to studies looked at in the assessment, CO₂ storage in geological formations could account for 15-55% of all emission reductions needed to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere between now and 2100. The "IPCC Special Report on Carbon Dioxide Capture and Storage" was written by 100 experts from over 30 countries and reviewed by other experts and Governments.

Move in research focus (Australia)

Australia's primary scientific organisation will move away from renewable energy research in support of the federal government's coal-friendly technologies. The CSIRO will be increasing its research on energy by 5 to 10%, and will be concentrating on a range of low-emission greenhouse gas mitigation strategies, including clean coal technologies, post combustion capture (see below) and geosequestration.

Research and development on technological solutions (Australia)

CSIRO said that a variety of technological advances being developed can dramatically reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions. One of the key initiatives being developed by CSIRO's Division of Energy Technology and Energy Transformed Flagship, known as Post Combustion Capture (PCC), can reduce CO₂ emissions by more than 85% from existing coal and gas fired power stations when coupled with carbon storage.

PCC works by capturing greenhouse emissions after the fuel is burnt in a power station. It can be retro-fitted to existing power plants, integrated into new power stations and used in conjunction with renewable systems such as solar power to minimise efficiency losses from power stations. CSIRO is currently constructing a pilot PCC plant in Newcastle which will be coupled with solar power.

CSIRO is undertaking research across a range of areas, including: low emissions technologies for fossil fuel use and efficient coal production; renewable energy and energy storage systems; potential use of H₂ in the energy cycle; distributed energy generation; energy management and reducing the environmental consequences of energy use.

EU CCT deals with China

The EU has unveiled plans to transfer China the technology for a power station designed to combat climate change. The clean coal power plant technology proposed will include capture and storage of CO₂ (CCS). CCS projects involving natural gas are already underway in Europe and others are planned for the UK and elsewhere. By 2030, China's CO₂ emissions from coal use will double. It is proposed that joint research and development between UK, European and Chinese partners will involve academic, research institute and industry partners – leading, it is hoped, to

a demonstration project starting up between 2010 and 2015. The move is part of a new climate change partnership agreement between the EU and China to develop advanced “zero-emissions” coal technology and to significantly reduce the cost of key energy technologies.

Mining giants back clean coal push (Australia)

Australia’s coal industry is racing to establish a clean coal technology fund before the end of March, in time to support applications to tap into the Federal Government’s \$500M low emissions technology fund. The Government aims to support only large projects (about \$20M and above) and is prepared to contribute \$1 for every \$2 put in by industry. The key criterion is the ability of the technology to reduce Australia’s energy sector emissions by at least 2% per annum over the longer term, and the potential to be available commercially by 2020 to 2030.

The coal industry is planning to pool its resources to create a fund of hundreds of millions of dollars to back development projects. The country’s biggest miners have been pushing the plan under the umbrella of the Australian Coal Association (ACA). ACA hoped the entire coal industry would back the fund. It will be a voluntary fund and expects a significant level of buy-in from the producers. A range of funding options are under consideration, including making company contributions proportionate with production or exports.

Major miners behind the plan include Anglo Coal, BHP Billiton, Rio Tinto and Xstrata, as well as mid-tier players such as Centennial Coal. The ACA is aiming to enlist technical experts to work with its own research and development committee to identify projects to support.

Portable coal quality measuring instrument

Natural gamma radiation (NGR) is the unrivalled technology for measuring the ash content in coal on-line, helping producers to maximise their saleable tonnage and enabling customers to check the quality of their delivered coal, often leading to price reductions. Bretby Gammatech of Melbourne, Derbyshire, UK has developed the on-line natural gamma coal quality monitor system for monitoring conveyed coal and more recently applied NGR technology to a portable system, the Ash Probe.

Comprising a display unit and separate probe for inserting into piles of coal, the latest MkII Ash Probe features a customised carry case. The main instrumentation, complete with qwerty keyboard, LED display, rechargeable battery and on-board computer, is protected in a thermoplastic instrument case, modified with a shoulder strap, removable lid, tailored inner moulding and a fully sealed base compartment, to prevent the ingress of moisture and coal dust.

Compact and light in weight, combined with high impact strength and outstanding durability, the new case design allows Bretby Gammatech’s Ash Probes to be shipped and deployed around the world, to such hostile environments as Siberian opencast sites, where temperatures can fall to -35°C, or Indian mines, where extremes of over 45°C are often experienced.



For further information, please visit: www.bretbygammatech.co.uk or www.qed-design.com

Coal Conversion Facts (December 2005)

The current edition of the ‘Coal Conversion Facts’ fact card is available to view below. If you would like to download a PDF version of the card, please click http://www.worldcoal.org/assets_cm/files/PDF/coal_conversion_facts_2005.pdf

EVENTS

Energy Federation of New Zealand (EFNZ) Luncheon Seminar on “Government’s Energy Programmes and Policies – Current and Future Prospects/Climate Change Policies and Issues – Fresh Outlook” with Hon David Parker, Minister of Energy, 9 February 2006, InterContinental Wellington NZ. Tel: +64 4 570 3712 Fax: +64 4 570 3701 Email: C.Gazo@crl.co.nz or energy.fed@crl.co.nz.

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

8th Annual National Power New Zealand 2006, Auckland NZ, 1-3 March 2006, Hyatt Auckland. Tel: +61 2 9005 0777 Fax: +61 2 9281 3950; www.terrapinn.com/2006/npnz_nz

McCloskey's coal conference of the Americas 2006 Cartagena, Colombia, 15-17 Mar 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

AshTech 2006: international conference on coal fired power station ash Birmingham, UK, 15-17 May 2006 AshTech 2006, UK Quality Ash Association, Regent House, Bath Avenue, Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV1 4EG, UK Tel: +44 1902 810087 Fax: +44 1902 810187 Email: Conference@UKQAA.org.uk Internet: www.ukqaa.org.uk/AshTech2006/

31st international technical conference on coal utilization and coal systems Clearwater, FL, USA, 21-25 May 2006 Barbara A. Sakkestad, Coal Technology Association, 601 Suffield Drive, Gaithersburg, MD 20878, USA Tel: +1 301 294 6080 Fax: +1 301 294 7480 Email: BarbaraSak@aol.com Internet: www.coaltechnologies.com

China power conference Shanghai, China, 4-6 Jul 2006 Aaron Anstey, PennWell Publishing (UK), Warlies Park House, Horseshoe Hill, Upshire, Essex EN9 3SR, UK Tel: +44 1992 656 614 Fax: +44 1992 656 704 Email: attendingchina@pennwell.com Internet: www.powerinchina.com

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@pennwell.com Internet: www.rome2007.it

FEEDBACK

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We value your feedback on issues discussed in this e-Newsletter.
For comments or enquiries about specific articles, please contact:*

*The Editor
CRL Energy Ltd
PO Box 31-244 Lower Hutt
Phone: 04 570 3715
Fax: 04 570 3701*

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