

Company partners with UW to pursue clean-coal technology

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Calling the technology a “potential breakthrough” in treating and marketing Wyoming coal, the University of Wyoming is partnering with Clean Coal Technologies Inc. (CCTI) to develop the company’s patented coal refining technology.

Clean Coal’s process is being tested at an Oklahoma coal-fired power plant with plans to move the test plant to the Powder River Basin. It reduces the moisture in coal in a way that leaves the mineral stable and safe to handle. Along with producing more energy than untreated coal, the refined Clean Coal product also produces fewer harmful emissions when burned, including carbon dioxide.

If the testing proves sound and Clean Coal can market its treated coal, it would be “a potential breakthrough technology for benefiting Wyoming coal and creating new market opportunities that can grow demand,” said Richard Horner, director of special projects and emerging technology for UW’s School of Energy Resources, in a press release announcing the agreement.

The CCTI process has potential to enhance research already being done by the university, Horner said.

“There are proprietary features of the CCTI technology that have scope to be incorporated into our ‘coal refinery’ concept, which we have been working on now for over two years,” he said. “Different technology platforms can be linked and leveraged to make wide-ranging fuels, materials and chemical products while producing minimum waste or environmental hazard.”

Clean Coal has been operating a multi-million dollar test facility at a coal plant in Oklahoma and has said the next step is to move that facility to the Powder River Basin, where the company also has committed to building a commercial production plant.

“CCTI has identified Wyoming as a most appealing location to further develop and commercialize our proprietary technology,” said CCTI CEO Robin Eves in a company statement.

He called the agreement between the company and university “a very significant and deliberate step for our company and, working together, (it) will allow CCTI to confidently further develop the wide-ranging potential and prospects for its patented and proven coal-beneficiation technologies.”

Phil Christopherson, executive director for Energy Capital Economic Development, called the agreement “really good news” and said that his organization has been working with Clean Coal Technologies and the university for more than a year.

Having the support of and collaboration with the University of Wyoming also is a big boost for Clean Coal and validation of its coal refining process, Christopherson said.

“That’s a huge thing,” he said. “It gives (Clean Coal) more ammunition to go out and market their product.”

Drawing the moisture out of coal isn’t a new idea, Christopherson said. Finding a way to do it that keeps the coal stable is the breakthrough the industry has been looking for, he said.

“That’s the key,” he said. “This type of thing has been tried again and again, but the result hasn’t been stable. But they’ve proven their technology works. It really has a potential to be a really big win.”

He said Clean Coal eventually would like to move its test plant to the PRB from Oklahoma, and has looked at three locations in Campbell County to do that. In addition, should the coal refining technology reach a point of becoming marketable, the company also wants to build a production plant here, Christopherson said.

“That’s the next step in the process,” he said, adding that the agreement with UW “needed to happen before they could really move on.”