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NEWS RELEASE

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HYDROGEN ENERGY FORUM COMING TO MILES CITY

MISSOULA—

A billion-dollar economic development opportunity for Eastern Montana will be discussed during a 6:30 p.m. forum Thursday, May 1, at **Miles City** Community College Room 106.

For the past several months, state leaders have worked with The University of Montana College of Technology's Hydrogen Futures Project, exploring ways to take advantage of Montana's natural, renewable and human resources to turn around the state's economy.

Forum participants will discuss a U.S. Department of Energy proposal to create the world's first coal-fired, zero-emissions, electricity- and hydrogen-producing power plant. Eastern Montana is one potential site.

"This is a great opportunity for Montana," said R. Paul Williamson, dean of the College of Technology and an organizer of the Hydrogen Futures Project. "Montana is one of the few states that has all the raw materials in a close proximity required to manufacture hydrogen and related items."

As announced by President George Bush in his State of the Union Address, the DOE is preparing to launch the "FutureGen" plant and is inviting proposals for its development. More information about the project is available at www.fe.doe.gov/techline/tl_futuregen1.shtml.

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The Miles City forum will inform local and state leaders about the project and begin an intensive, demanding proposal process in which Montana will compete against other coal-producing states for FutureGen.

“We have a chance to play a very proactive role in changing the economy of Montana,” said Mack Cole, chair of Montanans for Responsible Energy Development, “and we are pleased that we can be involved in this first most-critical step in the process.”

Two national leaders have been invited to attend the forum: Myer Steinberg, a key researcher at Brookhaven Labs who works with coal gasification and carbon dioxide sequestration, and Lowell Miller, the DOE fossil energy director, who will explain the process of hydrogen and CO₂ sequestration and the FutureGen project.

“Montana can play a pivotal role in our national energy future,” said U.S. Sen. Conrad Burns, a member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. “We need to promote opportunities like this and capitalize on the great potential our state holds for clean energy production.”

The forum will be sponsored by Burns’ office, the office of U.S. Rep. Denny Rehberg, Montanans for Responsible Energy Development, the Governor’s Office of Economic Opportunity, the Montana Department of Commerce, the Montana World Trade Center, Miles City Community College, MSE Technology Inc. and UM’s Montana Tech, among others.

For more information, call Williamson at (406) 243-7851 or Tod Kasten at (406) 485-3374.

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