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Energy and Telecommunications Interim Committee

60th Montana Legislature

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ETIC to meet in Colstrip, host carbon sequestration discussion

HELENA -- The Energy and Telecommunications Interim Committee is headed to the "energy capital of Montana" to kick off a detailed study aimed at analyzing the prospects for carbon sequestration in the Big Sky state.

The committee meets September 6-7 in Colstrip. Born in 1924 when the Northern Pacific Railroad started mining coal to fuel steam locomotives, Colstrip is known as the "energy capital of Montana." Today the Colstrip power plant operates four coal-fired generating units that are capable of producing more than 2,100 megawatts of electricity.

The agenda includes tours of the Colstrip Steam Electric Station and the adjacent Rosebud Mine and multiple presentations on carbon sequestration. The ETIC is devoting the largest portion of its time over the coming months to discussing a potential policy and regulatory framework to utilize sequestration in Montana. While in Colstrip, the discussion will focus on geological sequestration and sequestration for enhanced oil recovery. Terrestrial sequestration, efforts to store carbon in biomass, such as forest or agricultural systems, will be discussed at future meetings.

The complete ETIC study will include an examination of methods and technologies available for carbon capture, transportation, and use; a review of the economic costs and effects of carbon sequestration; a feasibility study focused on Montana; and a review of the findings and recommendations of the Montana Climate Change Advisory Committee related to carbon sequestration.

Following the tours, the committee will hear several presentations on sequestration. On Thursday the committee will hear from the Big Sky Carbon Sequestration Partnership, led by Montana State University. It is one of the U.S. Department of Energy's seven regional partnerships where researchers are developing a framework to address carbon dioxide emissions.

The Northern Plains Resource Council will discuss its concerns about surface owners being impacted by large-scale carbon sequestration operations in eastern Montana. Ron Harper, chief executive officer and general manager of Basin Electric, will provide detailed information on

sequestration. The Dakota Gasification Company, a subsidiary of Basin Electric, is involved in a substantial carbon sequestration project. About 10 million tons of CO₂ have been captured at the company's Great Plains Synfuels Plant near Beulah, North Dakota, and sequestered in Canadian oil fields. The CO₂ is delivered through a 205-mile pipeline. Harper recently attended the International Energy Agency and Carbon Sequestration Leadership Forum workshop for the G8 held in Norway. The forum focused on early opportunities for carbon capture and storage.

On Friday the committee will hear from the National Center for Appropriate Technology, the Montana Board of Oil and Gas, and the Montana Department of Environmental Quality. Those discussions also will focus on carbon sequestration, renewable energy and conservation. The Public Service Commission and Department of Commerce Energy Infrastructure Promotion and Development Division also will provide updates.

The ETIC meeting starts at 7:30 a.m., Sept. 6 in Colstrip, with the committee departing for tours of the power plant and mine. Seating for the tours is limited, and all tour attendees must have confirmed in advance of the meeting. The formal meeting and presentations begin at 1 p.m. at the Isabel Bills Community Learning Center, 520 Poplar Drive, in Colstrip. The meeting wraps up Friday, Sept. 7 at noon. Rep. Harry Klock chairs the committee and Sen. Greg Lind serves as vice-chairman. A complete agenda can be found at:

http://leg.mt.gov/css/committees/interim/2007_2008/energy_telecom/default.asp.