Six Times To The Sun—And Back!

The sheer size of Alaska's coal reserves boggles the mind. The official state estimate? Five and a half trillion tons! That's over half as much as all the rest of the country combined...

Enough to fill a line of coal cars stretching from the earth to the sun and back—six times!

And seventeen billion tons of that coal are within a few miles of the new intertie linking Anchorage and Fairbanks.

It's coal that's ideally suited for generating electricity. And today, technology allows us to build new plants that burn it with no smoke plumes, no odors, no pollution.

We'd like to build one—under an innovative financing partnership with the state. It would provide low-cost power for decades to railbelt residents.

Coal. It had its beginnings in the distant past. But it just may be the fuel of the future.

We thought you ought to know.
RDC Board tours Usibelli Coal Mine

Players: Mitch Usibelli, Chief of Engineering for UCM; and visitors about the mine.

Setting: The group is walking drag-line visitors about the mine.

Story: The RDC board members boarded a bus for the short ride to Harper Lodge, a beautiful new facility just outside of Denali National Park. On Saturday, it was bright and early for a bus ride to the Usibelli Coal Mine headquarters in Healy. As we munched on breakfast sandwiches, the steward, who had a repertoire that ranged from old standards to some new tunes, entertained us with his guitar. Once at the Usibelli Coal Mine, the board members were invited for some, while others enjoyed the outdoor deck or dined in the photo at left. Usibelli brothers Mitch, Chief of Engineering, and Joe Jr., President, explained all aspects of their operation before loading us into the walking dragline and driving us to Harper Lodge, a beautiful new facility just outside of Denali National Park.

In a nutshell, the proposed Healy Cogeneration Project is a marriage of leading edge technologies which could produce very significant benefits for the Railbelt and indeed the whole of Alaska. The Healy Cogeneration Project comprises a coal-fired power plant with the capacity to produce between 100 and 150 megawatts of electric power and a coal processing plant which would utilize heat energy from the power plant to dry or gasify typical Healy coal to produce a premium quality fuel. The initial capacity of the coal processing facility would be 500,000 tons of product a year from about 650,000 tons of low cost feed coal. The Healy project is expected to cost approximately $200 million and would be the largest single non-military and non-oil and gas resource project in Alaska. The project is being carried out by Usibelli Coal Mine Inc., Brown & Root, joint partners in the project, resource development and engineering, and the University of Alaska. The project has the potential to create 2,000 union jobs and would be the largest single non-military and non-oil and gas resource project in Alaska.

A market for the electrical power is fundamental to the project feasibility, therefore the project partners want to win the support of the major Railbelt utilities by convincing them that coal-fired generation provides the best assurance of low cost energy for the Railbelt well into the twenty-first century. Utility power demand projections are currently not very encouraging, however, the Healy project partners are confident that the Railbelt economy will retain its growth cycle that will surely follow the present deep recession. Historically, utilities have tended to rely on adding gas-fired generation, or most recently state-funded hydro-electric capacity, to satisfy demand growth. With more than 60% of generating capacity in the form of gas-fired units concentrated in stable communities to Anchorage, there are legitimate concerns regarding the vulnerability and undue dependence upon natural gas for power generation.

The case for coal-fired generation can be argued very effectively, probably the single greatest determinant in the short-term to project viability hinges on use of the Railbelt Fuel Energy Fund (REF). An earlier draft copy, which alleged oil development had caused more damage than what the government had originally predicted, was approved by the regional ocean program. The case for coal-fired generation can be argued very effectively, probably the single greatest determinant in the short-term to project viability hinges on use of the Railbelt Fuel Energy Fund (REF). An earlier draft copy, which alleged oil development had caused more damage than what the government had originally predicted, was approved by the regional ocean program.

The benefit of the low interest financing rate attendant upon this proposal would be passed through to the Railbelt consumer in the form of low cost electricity. This should be a formula which the electrical utilities would support since it provides for future predictable low cost power for their customers. The Healy Project, although challenging in terms of human/energy and resourcefulness, could pave the way for economic recovery and needed diversification in the Railbelt.

Final report gives Prudhoe clean bill of health

A final U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service report analyzing predictions made about the development of the Prudhoe Bay oil field concludes that any adverse environmental impact would be limited to the immediate area.

The report shows the environmental impact of oil and gas development for the most part has been far less than was originally feared. The report concludes that the project would have very little or no significant impact on the environment.

The report is a welcome development for the railbelt region and the state of Alaska. The project has been subject to intense scrutiny and criticism since its inception. The report concluding that the project would have very little or no significant impact on the environment is a significant victory for the railbelt region and the state of Alaska. The project has been subject to intense scrutiny and criticism since its inception. The report concludes that the project would have very little or no significant impact on the environment.

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Ketchikan editor seeks to offset environmental propaganda machine

By Senator Frank Murkowski

It looks like a biblical story of David and Goliat. Ketchikan Daily News publisher Lew Williams is an ambi-

tuous crusade to tell America the importance of the Tongass timber harvest program — and he’s challenging the marnnh

environmental lobby to stick to the facts.

The lobby groups have been distributing to the national press misinformation and distortions about the timber program in the Tongass. Their emotional appeal has resulted in a number of editorials in national publications attacking the Tongass, and the Ketchikan publisher has decided to do something about it.

Using his network of newspaper contacts in the Lower 48, Lew receives copies of the propaganda being mailed to the press by the Wilderness Society, Sierra Club and other lobby groups. He then responds with a mailing of his own to the national papers, telling them the facts about the timber industry and its importance to the Tongass.

For Lew and the other people of Southeast, the outcome of the Tongass debate now before Congress is very significant. It’s about their economic future.

Having followed this issue closely for many years, Lew Williams is probably the best able to explain it to others, and I’ll use his words here with permission.

“The forest plan, fought for by Alaskans and professional foresters as far back as the 1920s, calls for harvesting 1.7 million acres per year of the 16.7 million-acre Tongass over 100 years. At the end of 100 years, cutting of second growth begins in the same areas, providing jobs and opportunities for future Americans in a land of clear air, beautiful scenery and plentiful resources. The second growth will be top quality timber in twice the volume of the old growth, thanks to husbanding of professional foresters. The program can recycle for hundreds of years without touching 90 percent of the forest.

“The plan never really started until pulp mills were attracted to the Tongass. The biggest was the纸 incorporation in the 1980s. By employing the entrepreneurial approach, almost automatic diversion of energy from the wilderness to the forest has been offset by the pulp mills. The latter is a story that can’t be told about the Tongass. The pulp mills have invested $2 billion in Alaska — and get fair media treatment for Alaska about 10 percent of the time.

“The forest plan is non-negotiable. It’s in the land law, in the constitution, in the law that established the national forests.

“Now the Wilderness Society is describing the $40 million as a subsidy for timber. It’s more a subsidy for wilderness or compensation for timber lost to wilderness. Now Congress is being panicked into political tinkering again, frightened by the Wilderness Society’s editorial and its associates in the environmental community.”

That’s a pretty succinct summary of the Tongass issue — one which the Ketchikan publisher is sharing with editors across America.

Another way that Lew Williams is making his case to the national media is by sharing with them the editorials of other newspapers in Alaska — almost all of whom have come out in support of the position opposing “further tinkering” of the plan.

He has mailed editorials from The Anchorage Times, Fairbanks News-Miner, Juneau Empire and Peninsula Clarion to the major newspapers in the Lower 48 that have shown an interest in the subject.

In his quest to offset the environmental propaganda machine and get fair media treatment for Alaska about Tongass, Lew Williams is accomplishing something else.

He’s reminding Alaskans of something we learned long ago, but may be forgetting in recent years. If we’re going to have any kind of economic base here, we must become entrepreneurs once again.

“Some are experiencing the mainland and are going to have to learn to compete. Because Alaska is a big state with a small population, Alaska’s competitive advantage is size. It can be taken advantage of by its current community or region is under attack by Outside interest groups.

“We have an easy target for special interest environmental organizations that depend on special causes to raise money. It’s easier for them to “win” here, because we don’t have the population or resources to match their arsenals. We certainly don’t have a chance if we don’t all band together when one of our communities is under fire.

“Lew Williams writes his editorials in the Ketchikan paper, but he’s not writing just for the people of Ketchikan. He’s hoping the rest of Alaska, and America, is listening as well.

This article appeared September 16 in The Anchorage Times.

Red Dog construction proceeds

By J. Shelby Stasny

“A few weeks ago, a member of the state administration address-

ed the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce. His remarks centered

around the fact that Alaska is different than other states in

that much of the wealth and land ownership rests in the hands of the

state. For this reason, the actions of our state officials should be

measured differently than officials or other states. As Alaska

is an “owner” state, it’s in its best interests. By employing the entreprenurial approach, almost automatic diversion of energy from the wilderness to the forest has been offset by the pulp mills. The latter is a story that can’t be told about the Tongass. The pulp mills have invested $2 billion in Alaska — and get fair media treatment for Alaska about 10 percent of the time.

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How much wilderness is enough?