

MSU wins \$66.9M carbon sequestration grant

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Wed Nov 19, 2008 at 08:44:11 AM MST

Montana State University just won a \$66.9M grant from the Department of Energy to "inject a million tons of carbon dioxide **into the sandstone rock layer** beneath southwestern Wyoming."

The award will allow the partnership to begin its Phase III project, a commercial-scale, eight-year carbon sequestration study that could begin as early as next year. That project will spend two years building infrastructure and drilling an 11,000-foot well into the sandstone rock layer west of Big Piney, Wyo. Then, during year's three through five of the project, the partnership will inject more than a million metric tons of CO₂ into the underground formation.

Carbon sequestration has a lot to do with the clean-coal policies of the Good Guv and the next federal administration. Without sequestering the carbon produced by squeezing blood (diesel) from stone (coal), any investment into coal-to-liquids will not be much of a benefit to any policy looking to greenhouse gas emissions.

Of course, as with any post of mine on the topic, I must quibble. One of the main problems with the type of sequestration MSU is being hired to do is that no one knows how long the gasses can stay underground. A better technique may be the kind described in an **October 2007 article** in the Missoula Independent, one that combines carbon with basalt and effectively "immobilizes carbon in a solid." And the money might be better spent on the actual alternative energy infrastructure that would replace the need for burning fossil fuels.

Still, it's a nice grant for a worthy cause to an institution we like. Hopefully MSU's project will tell us more about sequestration. The research done here could indicate whether sequestration is a fool's game or a valuable technique to stave of global warming in a world where we still burn fossil fuels.

Congrats, Cats