

**DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY****Notice of Intent To Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the Gilberton Coal-to-Clean Fuels and Power Project, Gilberton, PA****AGENCY:** Department of Energy.**ACTION:** Notice of intent.

**SUMMARY:** The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) announces its intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) NEPA regulations (40 CFR parts 1500–1508), and the DOE NEPA regulations (10 CFR part 1021), to assess the potential environmental impacts of a proposed project by WMPI PTY, LLC, to design, construct, and operate a demonstration plant near Gilberton, Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania. The proposed Gilberton Coal-to-Clean Fuels and Power Project, selected under the Clean Coal Power Initiative competitive solicitation, would produce electricity, clean hydrocarbon liquids, and steam from coal waste that exists in legacy piles from old mining practices. The proposed project would be the first commercial-scale demonstration of coal waste gasification and Fischer-Tropsch (F-T) synthesis of liquid hydrocarbon fuels in the United States. The proposed project would involve construction and operation of a plant to produce about 5,000 barrels-per-day of ultra-clean liquid hydrocarbon fuels and approximately 41 MW (megawatts) of electricity for the local electrical grid. The quantity of feed material for the plant could be up to approximately 4,700 dry tons-per-day of coal waste from prior and current anthracite mining. An estimated 300 million tons of this coal waste exists throughout Pennsylvania. The EIS will evaluate the proposed project and reasonable alternatives.

The EIS will help DOE decide whether to provide 16 percent (approximately \$100 million as a repayable loan) of the total estimated funding of \$612 million for the proposed project. The purpose of this Notice of Intent is to inform the public about the proposed project; invite public participation in the EIS process; announce the plans for a public scoping meeting and explain the EIS scoping process; and solicit public comments for consideration in establishing the proposed scope and content of the EIS.

**DATES:** To ensure that all of the issues related to this proposal are addressed, DOE invites comments on the proposed scope and content of the EIS from all

interested parties. Comments must be received by May 19, 2003, to ensure consideration. Late comments will be considered to the extent practicable. In addition to receiving comments in writing and by telephone (see **ADDRESSES** below), DOE will conduct a public scoping meeting in which agencies, organizations, and the general public are invited to present oral comments or suggestions with regard to the range of actions, alternatives, and impacts to be considered in the EIS. The scoping meeting will be held at D.H.H. Lengel Middle School, 1541 West Laurel Boulevard, Pottsville, PA, on May 5, 2003, beginning at 7 p.m. (see Public Scoping Process). The public is invited to an informal session at this location beginning at 4 p.m. to learn more about the proposed action.

Displays and other forms of information about the proposed agency action and the demonstration plant will be available, and DOE personnel will be present at the informal session to discuss the proposed project and the EIS process.

**ADDRESSES:** Written comments on the proposed EIS scope and requests to participate in the public scoping meeting should be addressed to the NEPA Document Manager for the Gilberton Coal-to-Clean Fuels and Power Project: Mr. Lloyd Lorenzi, National Energy Technology Laboratory, U.S. Department of Energy, P.O. Box 10940, Pittsburgh, PA 15236–0940.

Individuals who would like to otherwise participate in the public scoping process should contact Mr. Lloyd Lorenzi directly by telephone: 412–386–6159; toll free number: 1–800–276–9851; fax: 412–386–4604; or electronic mail: [lorenzi@netl.doe.gov](mailto:lorenzi@netl.doe.gov).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:** For information regarding the Gilberton Coal-to-Clean Fuels and Power Project or to receive a copy of the draft EIS for review when it is issued, contact Mr. Lloyd Lorenzi as described above. Those seeking general information on the DOE NEPA process, contact: Ms. Carol M. Borgstrom, Director, Office of NEPA Policy and Compliance (EH–42), U.S. Department of Energy, 1000 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20585–0119. Telephone: (202) 586–4600. Facsimile: (202) 586–7031, or leave a toll-free message at 1–800–472–2756.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:****Background and Need for Agency Action**

Since the early 1970s, DOE and its predecessor agencies have pursued research and development programs

that include long-term, high-risk activities that support the development of innovative concepts for a wide variety of coal technologies through the proof-of-concept stage. However, the availability of a technology at the proof-of-concept stage is not sufficient to ensure continued development and subsequent commercialization. Before any technology can be considered seriously for commercialization, it must be demonstrated. The financial risk associated with technology demonstration is, in general, too high for the private sector to assume in the absence of strong incentives. The Clean Coal Power Initiative (CCPI) was established in 2002 as a government/industry partnership to implement the President's National Energy Policy recommendation to increase investment in clean coal technology. This recommendation addresses a national challenge of ensuring the reliability of electric supply while simultaneously protecting the environment.

The goal of the CCPI program is to accelerate commercial deployment of advanced coal technologies that provide the United States with clean, reliable, and affordable energy. Through cooperative agreements established pursuant to the CCPI program, DOE would accelerate deployment of innovative technologies to meet near-term energy and environmental goals; to reduce technological risk to the business community to an acceptable level; and to provide private sector incentives required for continued activity in innovative research and development directed at providing solutions to long-range energy supply problems.

**Proposed Action**

The proposed action is for DOE to provide, through a cooperative agreement with WMPI, financial assistance for the proposed Gilberton Coal-to-Clean Fuels and Power Project (hereafter termed the “Gilberton Project”). The Gilberton Project would be designed for long-term commercial operation following completion of an approximately 27-month demonstration period under a 6-year cooperative agreement with DOE, and would cost a total of approximately \$612 million; DOE's share would be approximately \$100 million (16%) in the form of a repayable loan.

The Gilberton Project would result in design, construction, and operation of a new plant to co-produce approximately 41 MW of electricity for export to the local grid at extremely high environmental performance, about 5,000 barrels-per-day of high quality, ultra-clean liquid hydrocarbon products, and