

EPA To Propose New Rules For Carbon Sequestration

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Monday, Oct 15, 2007 --- The Environmental Protection Agency said Thursday that it would develop new regulations for geological sequestration, the process by which emissions from coal-fired power plants and other sources are captured and then stored deep underground.

According to the EPA, the regulations will ensure that there is an effective permit system in place for geological sequestration under the Safe Drinking Water Act. Though geological sequestration is not yet commercially available, the Bush Administration is touting it as a way to reduce climate change.

“Addressing global climate change will require fundamental changes in the way the world generates and uses energy,” said EPA Administrator Stephen L. Johnson. “By harnessing the power of geologic sequestration technology, we are entering a new age of clean energy—where we can be both good stewards of the earth, and good stewards of the American economy.”

Among other things, the Safe Drinking Water Act establishes a program to allow the injection of fluids into the ground as long as they don't endanger current or future sources of drinking water.

However, because geological sequestration is not currently mentioned in the act, the EPA said it would propose new regulatory changes by the summer of 2008. The public and stakeholders will be invited to provide input, according to the EPA.

The EPA also said it is working with the Department of Energy to research geological sequestration, including what impact it will have on health, safety and the environment.

Just last week, for example, the DOE announced that it had awarded \$197 million for the first three large-scale carbon sequestration projects in the United States.

“Successful demonstration of large volume carbon capture and storage technology plays a key role in achieving President Bush's goals for a cleaner energy future,” said Deputy Secretary of Energy Clay Sell. “Coal is vitally important to America's energy security and this technology will help enable our nation, and future generations, to use this abundant resource more efficiently and without emitting greenhouse gas emissions.”

Among other things, the projects will conduct large volume tests to determine the ability of different geologic settings to permanently store over one million tons of carbon dioxide in deep saline reservoirs.

The projects, known as the Plains Carbon Dioxide Reduction Partnership, the Southeast Regional Carbon Sequestration Partnership and the Southwest Regional Partnership for Carbon Sequestration, are just the first of numerous sequestration projects planned, the DOE said.

Currently, there are only three carbon sequestration demonstrations in the world: the Weyburn Project in Canada, the Sleipner Project in Norway and the In Salah Project in Algeria.

“The successful demonstration of carbon storage in these U.S. geologic basins...will play a crucial role in future infrastructure development and sequestration technology to mitigate CO2 emissions,” the DOE said.