

In this issue...

China latest country to join FutureGen project...page 2

Mining market snapshot... page 2

NMA welcomes senior DOE official...page 3

Warner ends campaign to take ranking spot on Senate EPW committee...page 3

OSM accepting proposals for 2007 Applied Science Program...page 3

Newsbits...page 3

Happy Holidays!

In recognition of the holiday season, *Mining Week* will take a short publication hiatus. The next issue of *Mining Week* will be published Jan. 5. NMA extends best wishes for the holiday season and a Happy New Year to all *Mining Week* readers.

President Bush signs mine safety tax package into law; backs clean coal technology investment

President Bush this week signed into law a sweeping piece of tax, trade and health care legislation that contains a \$21 million package of tax incentives designed to assist mine operators in their ongoing efforts to strengthen underground mine safety.

The president signed the "Tax Relief and Health Care Act of 2006" (H.R. 6111) into law on Dec. 20, after Congress gave final approval to the bill earlier this month. The mine safety tax incentives contained in H.R. 6111 include a three-year provision that allows mine operators to expense 50 percent of the cost of qualified mine safety equipment, as well as a tax credit permitting mine operators to claim part of the cost of training qualified mine rescue team members.

Also on Dec. 20, the president held a news conference at which he emphasized the need to continue government support for the development of clean-coal technologies, noting the abundance of coal found in the United States. "[W]e need to be able to tell the American people we're going to be able to use that coal to generate electricity in environmentally friendly ways," said the president. "We got a comprehensive plan to achieve the objective that most Americans support, which is less dependency upon oil," he told reporters.

"The package of mine safety incentives President Bush signed into law this week will go a long way in complimenting our industry's commitment to further advancing underground mine safety," said NMA President and CEO Kraig R. Naasz. "NMA appreciates the president's support for these measures and his continued support for promoting the

See Tax Incentives, page 2

U.S. to spearhead Asia-Pacific training, education and regulatory initiatives

At a recent meeting of the six-country Asia-Pacific Partnership for Clean Development and Climate's (APP) Coal Mine Task Force (CMTF) the U.S. agreed to lead an international effort to develop a set of proposals targeted at improving coal mining workforce training and education, while also agreeing to partner with China to analyze coal mining regulatory practices.

The meeting, held Dec. 5-7 in Pittsburgh, Pa., marked the beginning of a results-oriented phase for the CMTF, during which action plans will be developed, reviewed by partner nations and implemented.

See APP, page 2



Mine Safety Technology and Training Commission Chairman Dr. R. Larry Grayson detailed the results of a comprehensive mine safety report recently released by the commission during a meeting held earlier this month by the Asia-Pacific Partnership for Clean Development and Climate's Coal Mine Task Force.

China latest country to join FutureGen project

Efforts to construct the world's first near zero-emissions coal-fueled power plant received a massive boost last week following an announcement that China will join the Government Steering Committee of the FutureGen project. China's decision to join the steering committee was announced on Dec. 15 during the first-ever U.S.-China Strategic Economic Dialogue, held Dec. 14-15, in Beijing, China.

China becomes the third foreign government, after South Korea and India, to join the steering committee, which provides guidance and input on the design and testing program for the \$1 billion FutureGen plant that is being funded with about \$700 million from the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). The remainder of the project's funding will be supplied by a 12-member private industry alliance that includes the China Huaneng Group, China's largest coal-fueled power provider.

"China and the U.S. share a common energy resource in coal, so it is imperative that we work together to find ways to use coal effectively, efficiently, and without contributing emissions," U.S. Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman said in a Dec. 15 DOE release. "Our joint efforts in developing new energy technologies including clean coal and renewable energy will enhance our nations' energy security, provide for economic growth, and reduce harmful pollutants," said the secretary.

DOE is currently reviewing four potential sites, two in Illinois and two in Texas, for housing the project, which is scheduled to begin operations in 2012. The FutureGen plant will be the first to simultaneously produce both electricity and commercial-grade hydrogen from coal, while removing and sequestering carbon dioxide.

Once completed, the cutting-edge technology used to construct the 275 megawatt plant will be used by FutureGen member countries to reduce emissions, according to DOE.

More information is available at: www.doe.gov/news/4535.htm. ☒

Tax incentives continued from page 1

clean use of American coal to break our nation's addiction to foreign oil. NMA looks forward to supporting the administration's efforts to promote the development and deployment of cutting edge clean-coal technology that will allow us to fully utilize the massive energy wealth stored in America's vast coal reserves."

A copy of H.R. 6111 is available at: www.nma.org/attach/HR%206111.pdf. ☒

APP continued from page 1

The objective for the training and workforce effort is to improve the tools and standards used for education and certification, with a particular focus on concepts such as job-specific training and mentoring. The partnership with China will explore the benefits of developing leading practice guides and exchange programs. Preliminary plans for both projects will be submitted to the CMTF for review in March.

A consensus favoring U.S. leadership for these projects emerged following a presentation by University of Missouri-Rolla Professor R. Larry Grayson that detailed the findings contained in a comprehensive safety report released early this month by the Mine Safety Technology and Training Commission, which Dr. Grayson chaired. CMTF members were also compelled to task the U.S. with leading these endeavors in light of constructive input provided by safety experts from NMA member companies present at the meeting.

Outside of the projects the U.S. will lead, parallel efforts on technology, hazard management and safety will be led by Australia, Japan and India, respectively.

"The projects agreed to this month by APP members are further evidence of the partnership's commitment to implementing practical, effective solutions covering a range of important mining issues, including mitigating climate change and improving mine safety," said NMA President and CEO Kraig R. Naasz. "As the APP begins finalizing and implementing various project plans it is critical that the U.S. fully support the partnership, which is why NMA will continue urging members of Congress to adequately fund the APP and encourage NMA members to continue the strong support they have shown for the partnership."

A copy of Dr. Grayson's presentation is available at: www.coalminingsafety.org/documents/120506_report_presentation.pdf. ☒

Mining Market Snapshot		
Coal Figures	Cumulative year to date	Change over last year
<i>Week ended December 9, 2006</i>		
EIA Coal Production (000 tons)	1,092,221	2.4%
Edison Electric Institute Electricity Output (GWh)	3,766,228	0.1%
American Iron and Steel Institute Raw Steel Production (000 tons)	99,762	3.2%
Metal Figures		
Copper Prices (\$/mt - week avg. Grade A Cash) 12/8/06	\$6,909.60	
Gold Prices (\$/troy ounce - week avg. London Final) 12/8/06	\$638.61	
Source: NMA Weekly Statistical Summary/Platts Metals Week		

NMA welcomes senior DOE official



NMA Senior Vice President of Government and Political Affairs Dan Gerkin (left) welcomed U.S. Department of Energy Assistant Secretary for Fossil Energy Jeffrey Jarrett (right) to a holiday reception NMA hosted at its Washington, D.C., headquarters on Dec. 19. Gerkin and Jarrett discussed a number of important coal community issues for 2007 at the reception, which brought together congressional staff, officials from various federal agencies and NMA member company representatives. ✕

Warner ends campaign to take ranking spot on Senate EPW committee

Sen. John Warner (R-Va.) last week abandoned his effort to secure the ranking member slot on the Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee for the 110th Congress. In a Dec. 14 letter to incoming Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), Warner said he wants to focus on security matters and the "demands of a vigorous and challenging re-election campaign."

Warner's decision means outgoing EPW Committee Chairman James Inhofe (R-Okla.), who has cast a skeptical eye on climate change warnings, will become the top Republican on the committee in the Democrat-controlled 110th Congress. Warner had argued that his standing as the longest serving Republican member currently on the EPW committee should allow him to take the ranking member slot. However, Warner will continue to serve as a member of the committee in the new Congress.

Warner hinted that he may re-visit the issue, saying he would be in a position to decide on his "leadership options in the

111th Congress" if re-elected. Warner, the outgoing chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee, will not hold any ranking committee assignments in the 110th Congress, which he said will allow him to focus on security issues and a re-election campaign that could be difficult in light of recent Democrat gains in statewide Virginia elections. ✕

OSM accepting proposals for 2007 Applied Science Program

The Office of Surface Mining (OSM) announced last week that it is accepting applications for its 2007 Applied Science Program, which offers scholars the chance to secure upwards of \$100,000 in funding to help develop applications capable of assisting coal mining operations better protect and restore the environment. In a Dec. 15 release, OSM set an application deadline of March 2, 2007.

According to OSM, in 2005 the agency gave nearly \$1 million to 12 projects. OSM said applicants may request up to \$100,000, with funding to be made available after July 1, 2007.

OSM said applications focused on issues regarding blasting, hydrology, steep slope mining and reclamation, underground mine mapping and use of recycled materials will have the best chance of receiving funds. OSM also said that projects focused on landscape stability, soil development on reclaimed lands, vegetation assessment, wildlife conservation, reforestation and cropland reclamation will also be looked upon favorably.

More information is available at: www.mcrcc.osmre.gov. ✕

Newsbits

U. S. Department of Energy Assistant Secretary for Fossil Energy **Jeffrey D. Jarrett** this week announced the selection of **Thomas D. Shope** as the department's new principal deputy assistant secretary for fossil energy. Jarrett said Shope will play a vital role in ensuring that America's coal, oil and natural gas resources meet energy policy goals set down by **President Bush**. Shope previously served as the chief of staff in DOE's **Fossil Energy Office**, as well as chief of staff for the U.S. Department of the Interior's **Office of Surface Mining**. More information is available at: www.fossil.energy.gov/news/techlines/2006/06074-Thomas_Shope_Named_PDAS.html...Alabama

Sen. **Jeff Sessions** (R) announced last week that the **Department of Labor** (DOL) had approved a \$1.9 million grant to help create an expanded mine safety and mine systems technology program at **Bevill State Community College**. The grant, one of two DOL approved for Alabama, was awarded as part of **President Bush's Community-Based Job Training Initiative**, which aims to increase the capacity of community colleges to equip workers with the skills needed by local industries. DOL awarded 72 grants totaling \$125 million. More information is on the grants is available at: www.dol.gov/opa/media/press/eta/eta20062030.htm.



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