Exports affect on global warming?

By Mead Gruver
Associated Press

CHEYENNE, Wyo. (AP) — Exporting large amounts of Wyoming coal to East Asia would have a negligible effect on global greenhouse gas emissions because the amount of coal burned in those countries isn't a result of coal's availability so much as their rapid economic growth and heavy reliance on the fossil fuel to produce electricity, developers of coal export facilities said Thursday.

While environmentalists warn that exporting U.S. coal overseas has the same effect on climate change as burning it here, participants in a coal exports discussion panel at the Wyoming Infrastructure Authority spring energy conference said the global coal market isn't driven by supply but demand.

Some countries, particularly China, are committed for the foreseeable future to burn large amounts of coal no matter who steps up to provide it, they said.

The Powder River Basin of northeast Wyoming and southeast Montana is the top coal-producing region in the U.S., supplying around 40 percent of the nation's coal. Production is down over the past few years amid low prices for natural gas.

Should large docking facilities get approved and built in the Pacific Northwest, Wyoming could find new coal markets in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, the panelists said.

"The opposition to port developments in this country talk of creating greater coal burn in Asia if more U.S. coal is available," said Michael Mewing, a consultant with coal mine owner and export terminal developer Lighthouse Resources, Inc. "The reality of life is that demand will continue to grow, and it will be met whether the U.S. participates or not."

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> **— Michael Mewing**

Another panelist agreed, pointing to a recent U.S. Surface Transportation Board draft environmental study for a Montana rail line for coal shipments. The study found that exporting Wyoming coal overseas mostly would offset — and only marginally increase — existing international coal shipments, Millennium Bulk Terminals Chief Executive Officer Bill Chapman said.

Greenhouse gas emissions could in fact decrease because Wyoming coal burns hotter and therefore more efficiently than coals from other countries, Chapman said.

"The effect globally is slightly positive, or unable to observe by any movement of the needle whatsoever," he said.

Indonesia over the past 15 years or so has become a major coal exporter, supplying 35 percent of the Asian market, Mewing said.

The U.S., which after China remains the second-ranked producer of coal, could yet claim some of Indonesia's share of the market by exporting Powder River Basin coal, he said.

"You can more than compete with them. You are a superior grade of coal," Mewing said.

Lighthouse Resources, formerly known as Ambre Energy, owns the Decker Mine in Montana and the Black Butte Mine in southwestern Wyoming and is pursuing two major coal export terminals on the Columbia River in Oregon and Washington.

One is Millennium Bulk Terminals' facility in Longview, Washington, a former aluminum smelter eyed for conversion to a coal export facility. Lighthouse owns 62 percent of Millennium and Arch Coal the other 38 percent.

Another coal export terminal proposal undergoing government review is SSA Marine's proposed Gateway Pacific Terminal near Cherry Point, Washington, which is about 10 miles south of the Canadian border. Local tribes oppose that project, saying it would disrupt their fishing practices.

"We believe we have a good design that if given a fair environmental review, will prove to meet the state's environmental permitting requirements," said Joe Ritzman, vice president of business development at SSA Marine.

Many people in Washington state support coal exports, Chapman said.

"They understand we are not going to change what China does," he said.

Ore. women soon can get a year's supply of birth control

By Sheila V Kumar
Associated Press

SALEM (AP) — It's like a ritual for women across the nation: frequent treks to the pharmacist to refill birth control prescriptions.

It's a hassle for busy students, a headache for rural women with long drives, and a cause for panic for travelers on the road when their packs run out.

Soon, however, women in Oregon will be able to avoid such problems. The state has enacted a first-of-its-kind insurance law that will allow them to obtain a year's worth of birth control at a time, instead of the 30- or 90-day supply available now.

Gov. Kate Brown signed the legislation Thursday, saying it "has a simple premise that I wholeheartedly believe in: increase access and decrease barriers."

Supporters say the measure will reduce unintended pregnancies and make things easier for women, because they won't need to visit pharmacies as often.

The plan passed the Legislature easily and is part of a push from Democrats and Republicans alike to expand access to birth control in the state. Oregon legislators also are considering a widely supported proposal that would allow pharmacists to write birth control prescriptions for women who pass a self-administered risk-screening assessment.

The Catholic Church opposes contraceptive expansion, saying Oregon's measures could have "moral implications and social consequences."

Critics of the new law say it could increase health care costs for employers and insurers. It could be wasteful to dispense a year's worth of pills, for example, because a woman may decide to stop taking them or choose to switch prescriptions, they say.

"To me it's just a checkbook issue, plain and simple," Rep. Julie Parrish, a West Linn Republican, who opposed the measure.

Mary Nolan, interim executive director of Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon, said the benefits of the plan "are so obvious once you point them out. People had been accustomed to going along with 30 days for so long that people hadn't really questioned it."

She said the proposal has drawn interest from lawmakers in California, New York, and Washington state. A similar measure is pending in Washington, D.C., reproductive rights expert Elizabeth Nash said.

Insurance companies typically cover a 30- or 90-day supply of contraception, Nash said. But a year's supply "would reduce the potential for skipping pills or not having her patch or ring when she needs it," the Guttmacher Institute researcher said.

The plan would require women to first get a three-month supply to make sure there are no adverse reactions. Subsequent prescriptions could be filled for a year at a time.

It goes into effect Jan. 1.

Associated Press writers Jonathan J. Cooper and Summer Ballentine in Jefferson City, Missouri, contributed to this report.