

Coal-fired plant near Boardman designed with concern for environment

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the coal which would damage the crushers.
The fine powder is blown into the combustion chamber

where temperatures reach 3,000 degrees. The boiler walls contain steel tubing in which distilled water is circulated and heated to form high

pressure steam. Distilled water is used because impurities can cause severe corrosion within the boiler turbines. Steam is pumped from the

boiler to the high pressure turbine generator which produces the electricity. Concern for the environment has played a vital role in

the operation of the Boardman Coal Plant.
PGE has been monitoring the area since the early 1970's and tens of millions of dollars

have been spent on environmental control equipment.
The Boardman plant will use sub-bituminous, (very soft) low-sulphur coal from

the Almax Coal Co. mines in Gillette, Wyoming. Emissions from the plant will be released from a 456-foot-high chimney. Modern air quality control

equipment will control the emissions. When the coal is burned, 15 to 20 percent of the ash falls to the floor and is called bottom ash. About 80 to 85 percent of the ash leaves the furnace with the gases and is called fly ash.

A \$27.5 million electrostatic precipitator will collect 99.5 percent of the fly ash. A high voltage electric field collects the fly ash particles and when the plates are vibrated, the ash falls to the bottom into a hopper. About 40,000 pounds of fly ash will be produced every hour.

To further cut down pollution, the ash, when removed from the plant site, is taken in covered trucks and then buried. Coal on the plant site is washed with liquid sprays to suppress the dust.

The Boardman plant, built by Bechtel Power Corp., costs more than \$525 million. PGE owns 80 percent with Idaho Power Co. and Pacific Northwest Generating Co. each owning 10 percent. About 125 employees will work there permanently once the construction is completed. The plant will produce 530,000 kilowatts.

Last week, Heppner Gazette-Times News Editor Steve Powell flew on a private PGE airplane to Gillette, Wyoming to visit the Almax Coal Mines in wealthy Campbell County, which has 17 coal companies operating in it.

Gillette was a small town of about 2,500 until 1956 when it increased to 7,000 when oil was discovered. There is still oil in the area but coal companies began to surge into the area in 1970. There are now about 18,000 people in Gillette with a projection of 38,000 by 1990, said Don Warfield, Almax media representative.

Almax Coal Company is the third largest coal producer in the United States. It has two mines in Campbell County. The Belle Ayr Mine is 18 miles north of Gillette and is the largest producing coal mine in the U.S. It began production in 1973. The Almax Eagle Butte Mine eight miles north of Gillette is another mine PGE coal will come from.

Almax Coal Co. owns 11 coal mines and all but one is a surface coal mine. Its largest work force is at its only underground mine in Illinois. Most of the coal, about 90 percent, sold by Almax is purchased by electric utilities.

In the open pit method, top soil is removed by giant electric powered shovels. Overburden (older soil) is then removed. Overburden depth is anywhere from a few feet to a few hundred feet with an average of about 90.

When the coal seam is reached, the shovels put the coal into 120-ton-capacity diesel electric haul trucks which take the coal to a hopper. Crushers 80 feet below the hopper reduce the size of the coal, which is then carried up a huge conveyor belt to four 200-foot high silos. The silos can hold 12,000 tons each.

Railroad trains travel underneath the silos and the coal is deposited into the empty cars. The coal is not treated in any way because it is so clean. Warfield said.

Coal is loaded continually for one hour and 15 minutes until the trains are loaded. The trains travel through the silo on a cruise control at one mile per hour. One hundred tons of coal can be loaded in 30 to 40 seconds. The trains are 105 cars long with each carrying 100 tons.

The Belle Ayr Mine produces almost 15 million tons of coal a year with a coal seam of an average of 75 feet. It has 426 employees and pays more than \$13 million in state and local taxes. Belle Ayr loads four to five trains a day.

The Eagle Butte Mine produced almost 4 million tons of coal last year with an average coal seam of 130 feet. It has 199 employees and paid almost \$4 million in state and local taxes. It loads one or two trains a day.

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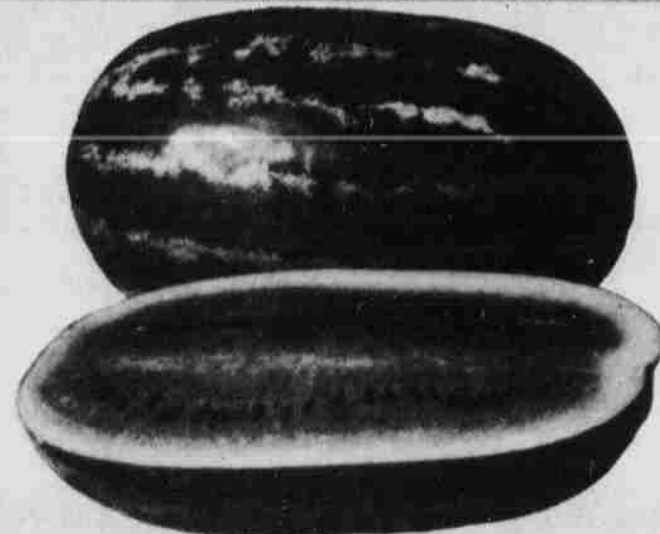
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