

Coal-to-liquids project on Crow Reservation finalized

By The Gazette Staff

The final documents were signed in Montana and in Australia on Wednesday on a development agreement for a major coal-to-liquids project planned for the Crow Indian Reservation.

At Crow Agency, Interim Tribal Chairman Cedric Black Eagle signed the contract that runs more than 500 pages, while Allan Blood, chairman of the Australian-American Energy Co. LLC, signed the same in his native country.

Black Eagle said the execution of the final documents is "another major milestone in bringing this important \$7.5 billion project to reality, for the benefit of the Crow Tribe, the state of Montana and the whole United States."

The preliminary trans-Pacific agreement was announced in August. The developers said that construction should start in 2012 and the facility should be operational by 2016 and run for several decades.

The plans call for using reservation coal to produce 50,000 barrels per day of alternative fuels. The greenhouse gases would be stored in underground aquifers on Crow land or sold to oil companies.

Water is crucial to the coal-to-liquid plant, which requires 15,000 acre-feet of water.

"Many Stars will bring thousands of good-paying jobs for Montanans who are ready to go to work and reduce our dependence on foreign energy," Gov. Brian Schweitzer said.