

Dry Fork plant construction reaches midpoint

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Construction of Basin Electric Power Cooperative's Dry Fork Station coal-fired power plant north of Gillette reached a milestone this week with the completion of the steel structure.

This month also marks the peak in the number of construction workers on site, topping out at 1,056 workers, according to Basin officials. Construction on the \$1 billion, 385-megawatt plant began in November 2007.

The plant is expected to be in service in 2011.

Being able to house more than 1,000 workers was a major concern in planning the project. As a requirement of the Wyoming Industrial Siting Act, Basin contracted with several hotels, apartments and housing proprietors in northeast Wyoming.

Basin's Dry Fork project coordinator, Curt Pearson, said that even at peak production there are still vacancies available in the housing mix secured by Basin.

Pearson said the number of workers onsite will hover around 1,000 this summer then begin to decrease in the fall and throughout the remaining construction process.

Conservation groups have complained that Dry Fork's emissions permit is too lenient on sulfur dioxide emissions, as well as greenhouse gases. Dry Fork Station is permitted to produce 3.7 million tons of carbon dioxide and 25.3 tons of methane -- the most potent greenhouse gas -- each year during the life of the plant.

However, Basin officials say the coop is currently working with Powerspan Corp. to develop carbon capture technology, and have said the technology may be applied at Dry Fork when and if it becomes available.

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