



HD Gov. Matt Mead to go to Australian **coal** conference

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CHEYENNE, Wyo. (AP) — Wyoming Gov. Matt Mead heads to Australia next week to participate in a conference on advanced **coal** technology. He will also evaluate how the Australians export **coal** to Asia, a market Wyoming is hungry to tap despite opposition from other states.

Mead and researchers from the University of Wyoming's School of **Energy** Resources will participate in the 2014 International Advanced **Coal** Technology Conference in Brisbane, a city on Australia's eastern coast.

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Mead spokesman Renny MacKay said the governor will leave Wyoming on Saturday, tour a **coal** port on Monday and speak at the conference on Tuesday. He said Mead's family will accompany him at their own expense.

The conference, which has been held in Wyoming and **China** in the past, focuses on how to capture, store and utilize the carbon released by burning **coal**.

"Those involved in this research are looking at technologies to add value to **coal** and its use now and in the future," Mead said in a prepared statement.

"We in Wyoming have much to offer to this work and much to gain from it. The advancement of **coal** research will benefit Wyoming, its people and the **coal** industry. I fully support it."

Wyoming is the leading **coal**-producer in the United States but has seen its production dwindle in recent years. Mead and other state officials blame the decline on the federal government's enacting tougher standards on emissions from **coal**-fired power plants. Federal officials say the standards are aimed at reducing global warming.

Wyoming's **coal** production dropped from more than 430 **million** tons in 2011 to 385 **million** tons last year, according to a recent state report. The state relies on **coal** revenues to fund education programs.

Wyoming didn't see any successful federal **coal** lease sales last year. One scheduled **sale** received no bids, and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management rejected the highest bid it received for another **sale**, saying it was below market value.

"Australia exports **millions** of tons of **coal** each year to Asian markets," Mead said Thursday. "These same countries are interested in Wyoming **coal**. I look forward to visiting and seeing a vibrant **coal** port to better understand the benefits and challenges associated with this method of export."

Wyoming's dreams of exporting **coal** to Asia have run into opposition from states in the Northwest that oppose the prospect of **coal** trains from the Powder River Basin heading to ports on the Pacific Coast.

Mead last year asked the White House to disregard pressure from the governors of Washington and Oregon who had asked the federal government to evaluate the effects of greenhouse gases that would be emitted by exporting U.S. **coal** to Asia from ports in the Northwest.

The Washington State Department of Ecology last month announced that it intends to undertake an environmental study evaluating the global-warming effects of exporting **coal** from Wyoming and Montana and burning it in Asia.

Mead last week signed a budget bill to fund the coming two years of Wyoming government **operations** that includes \$500,000 for possible litigation over access to deep water ports for **coal** exports.

At a press conference last week, Mead said he's concerned at the prospect of another state trying to do a "global environmental impact statement." He said such a study would be contrary to the tradition of environmental review and impede interstate commerce.

While Wyoming hasn't filed any legal action yet, Mead said, "I think that is a scenario where we're going to have to be aggressive in making sure that Wyoming is treated fairly in that process, and that we have an opportunity to ship Wyoming **coal** out of those ports."

Mead said he's skeptical global warming is caused by humans. "Science changes, and it's odd to me that scientists say 'never be skeptical,' because it was in the mid-70s when they were saying we're sunk because we're going to have global climate cooling," he said.

Mead said Wyoming has been at the forefront of research into carbon capture and sequestration. "What I'm not skeptical of is the markets globally," he said. "And you certainly see the pressure on **coal**."

"Whether we are skeptical about climate change or not, I'm not skeptical about what the markets are doing," Mead said. "You have to recognize what the markets are doing, what the rules and regulations are doing and all the more reasons that we've got to find some more solutions in particular with **coal**."

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