Garden City, KS
Circ. 8601
From Page: 8
10/12/2007
31240

KCP&L chief sees coal still in mix

LAWRENCE (AP) — A regional utility’s top executive acknowledged the dangers of global warming and promoted conservation Thursday, but he said coal-fired power plants still will be necessary to satisfy rising demands for energy.

Bill Downey, president and chief executive officer of Kansas City Power & Light Co., spoke during a conference where two Kansas scientists also outlined potential problems that climate change could cause. They include hotter summers and shorter crop-growing seasons in western Kansas, they said.

Discussions at the University of Kansas conference were timely because of a debate over proposed coal-fired power plants in Kansas and Missouri. Environmentalists worry about coal plants’ potential emissions of carbon dioxide, which most scientists see as a major contributor to global warming.

In Kansas, Sunflower Electric Power Corp. is seeking an air-quality permit from the state for its $3.6 billion plan to build two coal-fired plants in southwest Kansas. In Missouri, KCP&L is building a coal-fired plant northwest of Kansas City, but promised environmentalists in March to develop wind power and energy conservation programs.

Downey said helping consumers reduce their energy use shows great promise but demand will still require higher energy production, including electricity from coal-fired plants. Technology to make coal burn cleaner and to capture and store carbon dioxide is an important part of reducing CO2 emissions, he said.

“Coal, oil and natural gas will remain indispensable,” he said. “It’s a hard truth that a rapidly growing world economy will require large increases in energy supplies over the next quarter-century.”

About 130 people attended the conference, including utility officials, legislative staff, university scientists, and federal, state and local officials. Organizers wanted the event to touch on issues involving energy, the environment and the economy because they viewed them as intertwined.

But the mix of messages about the need for higher energy production and the potential problems from global warming troubled conference attendee Dan Nagengast, executive director of the Kansas Rural Center.

“It adds up to doom,” he said, chuckling over the clashing themes. “I don’t know where this goes, but it doesn’t look good.”

According to federal statistics, the U.S. generates almost half of its electricity from coal-fired plants, and Kansas and Missouri rely even more heavily on them. Three-quarters of Kansas’ electricity comes from coal-fired plants, while the figure is 85 percent for Missouri.

The federal government expects Americans’ demand for energy to grow over the next several decades, and Downey said KCP&L’s experiences back up that assumption.

It’s a global trend as well. Timothy Carr, a senior scientist with the Kansas Geological Survey, said the worldwide demand for energy will increase as China and other developing nations seek to improve their standards of living.

“It’s not going to come from renewables,” Carr said. “It’s going to come from coal.”

Nagengast questioned what he saw as an assumption that citizens of developing nations will want to emulate westerners’ over-consumption of goods and services.

“I think to draw these charts out, assuming that the whole world is going to be sort of as gluttonous as we are and ever-increasingly so, probably underestimates just how people perceive the world,” he said.

But even in forecasting higher energy demands and use of coal, Downey and Carr said the potential environmental issues must be addressed.

Johannes Feddema, a University of Kansas geology professor, said computer models suggest western Kansas would become drier with a rise in temperatures. And Charles Rice, a professor of soil microbiology at Kansas State University, said rains could become less frequent but more intense.

Because of concerns about CO2 emissions, Nagengast and other environmentalists want utilities to promote conservation and develop wind power.
Public employees attend program

Several public employees from southwest Kansas were honored recently by the University of Kansas for participating in the Certified Public Manager program offered by the university's Public Management Center.

Local, state and federal employees have been enrolled in this year's program since January. It was offered in southwest Kansas for the first time in 2006.

KU's Certified Public Manager credential is a nationally recognized emblem that complies with the guidelines and standards established by the National Certified Public Manager Consortium, according to KU.

Participants include the following:

Garden City — Alan Geier, city of Garden City; Clayton M. Hort, Kansas Department of Transportation; Rachelle L. Powell, city of Garden City; Dan F. Riney, city of Garden City

Lakin — Fred T. Jones III, city of Lakin

Ulysses — Linda J. McHenry, Grant County
Powerful debate over energy

By JOHN HANNA
Associated Press Writer

LAWRENCE (AP) — Timothy Carr delivered his message with a matter-of-fact tone: The world is going to consume more energy; little of the electricity it will need will come from renewable resources, and much of that power will come from coal.

Carr, a senior Kansas Geological Survey scientist, spoke last week at a University of Kansas conference. His remarks came a day before former Vice President Al Gore received a Nobel Prize for his campaign on global warming and a day after environmentalists had denounced Sunflower Electric Power Corp.'s plan for two coal-fired power plants in southwest Kansas.

Some of the loudest criticism of Sunflower's proposal is heard from the city of Lawrence, and Carr seemed to sense that some audience members wouldn't like his assessment.

"Shoot the messenger," he said.

Sunflower's $3.6 billion proposal has put it at the center of a debate over carbon dioxide emissions and global warming. But another question is part of the discussion: whether Kansas needs as much capacity to generate electricity as Sunflower plans to build.

"When you combine the benefits of both conservation and wind and look at the current coal plants and nuclear plant that we have, my view is that there is a very limited need for additional coal plants in the future," Lt. Gov. Mark Parkinson, co-chairman of an energy policy council, said during a recent interview.

Sunflower is seeking an air-quality permit from the Department of Health and Environment, and Secretary Rod Bremby has said he will decide whether to grant it by the end of this month. Environmentalists want Bremby to reject the permit over the plants' CO2 emissions, even though the state doesn't regulate the greenhouse gas, which most scientists see as a major contributor to global warming. Many legislators, including Senate President Steve Morris and House Speaker Melvin Neufeld, are pressuring him to approve a permit, seeing the project as vital to economic development.

The project would add two, 700-megawatt plants next to Sunflower's existing 360-megawatt plant outside Holcomb, in Finney County Construction on the second plant would be finished in 2013.

The total generating capacity of 1,400 megawatts would be enough to supply all of the households in Denver, Oklahoma City and Albuquerque, N.M., combined. Sunflower and a sister company, Mid-Kansas Electric Co., have 400,000 customers; together, the two have 1,200 megawatts of generating capacity.

Sunflower would export much of the new power into other states and argues the new plants will lead to bigger transmission lines that could hook up to wind farms. Sunflower executives — and many legislators — have no doubt the power will be needed, both in rural Kansas and points well beyond.

"We're entering into a time frame where energy growth is phenomenal," said Sunflower spokesman Steve Miller. "It's probably going to be a once-in-a-generation time when rural Kansas is going to benefit."

The International Energy Agency projects that energy consumption will be 52 percent higher in 2030 than it was in 2004. And, as Carr noted, coal is expected to remain a big source, particularly as China, India and other developing nations attempt to catch up to an American or European standard of living.

Of course, that prospect raises fears about climate change. Bill Downey, president and chief executive officer of Kansas City Power & Light Co., said after his own conference speech, "We have to find a way to clean up coal."

At least a few environmentalists don't accept Carr's assessment and believe conservation efforts can significantly slow any growth in energy demand.

Dan Nagengast, executive director of the Kansas Rural Center, said Americans shouldn't assume that other nations will emulate the "gluttonous" U.S. lifestyle. And, he said, legislators, utility executives and analysts aren't considering the potential of homes and farms generating their own, "off-grid" power from solar panels or windmills.

Even participants in the debate who aren't contemplating such a future question Sunflower's desire to build so much coal-fired generating capacity and sell most of the electricity outside the state.

Miller said such arguments make him "almost livid," adding that Sunflower wants to export power for the same reason Kansans export other products, such as aircraft.

And Jim Owen, a spokesman for the Edison Electric Institute, a trade group for investor-owned utilities, said assuming that a company will generate power only for customers within an assigned territory is an old business model.

Owen, Sunflower and others accept projections that Americans' demand for electricity will grow enough that new coal-fired power plants must be built to keep up with it. Environmentalists aren't likely to concede the point.
Social capital presentation planned

Molly DesBailets, a University of Kansas anthropology graduate student, will be giving a presentation this weekend on social capital in Garden City, measured by the trust, cooperation, inclusion and networks in the community.

According to DesBailets, social capital has been hailed as an indicator of community health, economic strength and governmental responsiveness.

She will present her preliminary research results from 2 to 4 p.m. Saturday at the Finney County Historical Museum, 403 S. Fourth St. She plans to include information about what social capital looks like currently in Garden City and whether it is a useful tool for addressing community issues.

The event is sponsored by the museum.
The Northwest Kansas Technical College will award scholarships in excess of $1000 as part of its Honors program. You must have a 3.2 GPA or higher to apply, but applications are due November 1, so don't wait! I will be taking any interested juniors or senior to Tech Expo on November 13 or 14.

Our vocational liaison from the Service Center will be taking interested students to Pratt Community College on November 9. It will be an all-day trip, and seniors may use a college day. There is no cost, other than lunch.

Jaye from Garden City Community College will be here to visit with interested people on November 1 during seminar. GCCC will be hosting Exploration Day on November 14.

Fort Hays State has two visits of interest coming up. November 3 is the Fall Tiger Day Open House. Free Tiger gear, football and volleyball games are part of the day.

Day, which will be a much more focused visitation, will be held November 5.

The University of Kansas department of music and dance host audition days on November 16, February 8 & 9, and 22 & 23. Music students must apply for admission to KU and the School of Fine Arts by February 1. Students wishing academic scholarships should apply before December 1. Early scholarships are available to those who apply by November 1.

Scientists with the Kansas Polymer Research Center at Pittsburg State have been honored for their ground-breaking discoveries with environmentally friendly materials. PSU also has a new degree program for teaching students how to manage security issues associated with the storage and transmission of information. Info on either is available at www.pittstate.edu.

The six Regents schools (KU, KSU, WSU, ESU, FHSU, PSU) are part of the Midwestern High Education Compact. The MHEC is not a scholarship but a means of tuition reduction. If you attend one of these schools you can attend other schools in Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and Wisconsin for in-state rates. Go to www.mhec.org to find the coordinator at each school.

The Burger King Scholars program is available from now until February 15. Go to www.bk.com/scholars for details.
Roth announces kickoff of Pawnee County scholarship fundraising campaign for KU

Bob Roth, chairman of the fund drive for Kansas University-Pawnee County Scholarships announced that local KU alumni, parents, students, and friends of the University are now conducting their 2007-2008 fund-raising campaign.

The Pawnee County Scholarship fund was established within the Greater University Fund to benefit deserving freshman students from this county attending KU. Since this local scholarship program began in 1958, one hundred eleven students have received these scholarships.

Roth praised the several supporters of the Pawnee County program that have provided financial assistance each year since 1958. "Many original donors voluntarily increase their support, which has allowed the scholarship amounts to grow tenfold," said Roth.
Tampa woman is state's first senior spelling champ

by MALINDA JUST
The Free Press

After successfully spelling the word "surreptitious," Jane Vajnar waited for the next word, which if spelled correctly, would make her the first Kansas Senior Spelling Bee champion.

For the win, Vajnar, a 68-year-old from Tampa, correctly spelled "write." "I regarded (writhe) as a pretty easy word," she said. "I was amazed. I thought they'd probably give me something really difficult (for the final word). I was a little tense up."

Vajnar, a former high school English teacher and current substitute teacher, decided to enter the contest in Salina after being persuaded by a friend, Dee Duggan.

"She's the one that got the entry form and everything," Vajnar said. "Dee definitely thought I should do it. And I guess I probably did it to see if the ol' brain still works—if I still had it in me."

The grade-school blue-ribbon spelling winner said she hadn't participated in a spelling bee for "well over 50 years." Because of that, she said she didn't have any expectations going into the Oct. 11 event.

"Well, naturally I hoped I could win it, but I certainly wasn't counting on it," she said. "I don't feel as if I'm nearly as good a speller as I used to be. I quite frequently have to look up words anymore, and I thought, 'If I get the right words, OK, and if I don't I'll probably go down the first time or two.'"

"But I was just doing it for fun, it didn't really matter if I won or not. But naturally it's more fun if you win."

Vajnar competed against 47 other contestants during the opening round of the bee, a written test of 50 words. The field was then narrowed to the 17 contestants who received perfect scores on the written portion.

The 17 contestants then moved to the stage in the Bicentennial Center for the oral portion of the spelling bee.

As the winner of the state spelling bee, Vajnar received a plaque and an all-expense paid trip to Cheyenne, Wyo., to compete in the National Senior Spelling Bee in June 2008.

"I'm looking forward to that. I've never seen that part of the country at all," she said.

And while she is looking forward to traveling, she said she probably won't do much in way of preparation for the contest.

"I don't really expect to do a whole lot of studying for the national," she said. "I suppose I might find a teacher that has a word list of tricky words. I might get and look at it. And, my friend Kim (Frantz) is giving me a word of the day."

MALINDA JUST / FREE PRESS

Kansas senior spelling champion

Jane Vajnar: "I guess I probably did it to see if the ol' brain still worked."
Vajnar defeated Delphine Holston of Abilene to win the state spelling bee. Lawrence Wetter of Salina finished third. The state spelling bee was sponsored by the Salina Senior Center, Salina Parks and Recreation 50-plus program, AARP of Kansas, the Kansas Association of Retired School Personnel, Kansas Area Agencies of Aging and Kansas State University at Salina. Seniors age 50 and older were invited to participate in the event. Judges were retired U.S. Sen. Nancy Kassebaum Baker; retired broadcaster Max Falkenstein, voice of University of Kansas Jayhawks for 60 years; and Rep. Josh Svaty, D-Ellsworth.
Sunflower permits rejected

Noting carbon's link to global warming, regulator says costs outweigh benefit.

BY SARAH KESSINGER
Harris News Service
kessinger@dailynews.net

TOPEKA - Legislative leaders and Sunflower Electric vowed to fight state environmental regulator Rod Bremby's decision Thursday to deny a permit for two coal-fired power plants in southwest Kansas.

Bremby based the decision on the 11 million tons of annual carbon dioxide emissions expected from the plants. Noting carbon's link to global warming, he cited the work of scientists who won the Nobel Peace Prize last week for their study of global warming.

Environmentalists and groups advocating alternative energy hailed the decision as a turn toward a future of cleaner energy.

"The Holcomb plant would have locked the state into another 50 years of dirty, polluting coal energy and eliminated the market for the renewable forms of energy that are the future," said Craig Volland with the Kansas Chapter of the Sierra Club.

Sunflower Electric spokesman Steve Miller said the Hays-based company and other investors in the $3.6 billion project, Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association of Colorado and Golden Spread Electric Cooperative of Texas, would gather a "truckload of lawyers" and "find out if there's a way..."
Permits

Continued from Page A1

around this or to overturn this.”
“Our main thing is we think this was an arbitrary and capricious decision,” Miller said.

Bremby’s agency, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, has an in-house, administrative appeals process for permits. If the outcome of that process doesn’t satisfy the parties, they can proceed to court.

Miller criticized Bremby’s referral to this year’s landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision in Massachusetts’ case to fight global warming. The eastern state was upheld in its effort to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from automobile tailpipes.

Bremby cited the case as the indicator to other states to regulate greenhouse gases from major sources, including power plants.

“That’s a stretch,” Miller said.

Miller also complained that Bremby’s technical staff had recommended Sunflower’s permit, determining it followed state and federal law.

But Bremby said in a media release that the decision was part of an emerging policy on carbon emissions. He noted Kansas law authorizes him to deny or modify an air quality permit to protect public health and environment.

“I believe it would be irresponsible to ignore emerging information about the contribution of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases to climate change and the potential harm to our environment and health if we do nothing,” Bremby said.

Reaction was swift from Republican legislative leaders who accused Democratic Gov. Kathleen Sebelius – who recently expressed opposition to the project – of pressuring Secretary of Health and Environment Rod Bremby.

“I am disappointed in the governor’s lack of support and leadership for western Kansas on this major development project,” Senate President Steve Morris, R-Hugoton, said. “I am hopeful this effort will not live or die on Secretary Bremby's decision.”

Legislative leaders said they would investigate the department's actions, which took 15 months and drew hundreds of public comments.

“His action today sends a clear message that economic development is not welcomed in rural Kansas,” said House Speaker Melvin Neufeld, R-Ingalls. “This is clearly to me a political decision dictated by Governor Sebelius.”

But the governor said she’d left the decision to Bremby, whose job isn’t to consider economic development. He made the announcement through a news release and videotaped statement posted on his agency’s Web site.

Alongside the posting were links to reports issued earlier this year by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Dozens of scientists worldwide, including some from Kansas State University and the University of Kansas, participated in writing the reports that concluded human activity was very likely the cause of climate change.

Carbon dioxide emissions from coal plants and automobile tailpipes are listed as key reasons.

Bremby also referred to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, saying the agency has “recognized the need for public health agencies to educate about the health risks of climate change.”

Sebelius and Lt. Gov. Mark Parkinson praised Bremby’s decision Thursday.

“As Governor, I am encouraged by this decision, because protecting the people of Kansas – in every corner of our state – has always mattered more to me than anything else.”

Sebelius said in a written statement that she would work aggressively for jobs and economic opportunities for western Kansas.

“We are committed to achieving growth but we must make smart choices about the future,” she said. “This project was sited in western Kansas, but it’s impact was not confined to one part of the state; it’s a decision that affects our entire state and nation.”

Many in western Kansas had hoped the Sunflower expansion would bring a major influx of new jobs and economic benefits.

“It’s a disappointment for us and for the overall economic benefit, of course,” said Eric Depperschmidt, executive director of the Finney County Economic Development Corporation. “But it does not set us back as far as economic development. We’re going to go forward. You win some; you lose some. I don’t look at this as a loss but just another setback on this project.”

Rank-and-file lawmakers’ reaction was mixed.

“What we should try to do now is state Legislature is look beyond this side versus that side and use this as a catalyst to move the state forward,” said Rep. Josh Svaty, D-Ellsworth.

“That’s where the state needs to be headed anyway.”

Sen. Janis Lee, D-Kensington, called the decision “arbitrary.”

But, she said, “moving forward it is critical that members of our administration and the Kansas Legislature continue to aggressively pursue renewable energy sources, such as wind generation. These opportunities will not only allow our state to lead the nation in clean energy, but will provide much-needed economic opportunities for rural Kansas.”

Southwest Kansans, however, responded more forcefully.

Rep. Bill Light, R-Rolla, lambasted Bremby and Sebelius, saying the decision leaves western Kansas’ economic prospects in the dust.

“There’s a growing need for power; you cannot deny that,” Light said of the electricity needs of new ethanol plants slated to be built in the region. “I’m sure the Legislature will want to take a strong look at this decision and see what we can do to maybe try and change this outcome.”

Hutchinson News reporter Jon Ruhlen contributed to this report.
Tribute to first black filmmaker highlights other unsung heroes

By Darcy Gray
The Hutchinson News
dgray@hutchnews.com

Oscar Micheaux, Lorenzo Fuller Jr. Perry Lowery, Gwendolyn Brooks, Langston Hughes. Do those names ring a bell?

The public now has the chance to learn more about these five notable Kansans at the 2007 Oscar Micheaux Memorial Celebration in Great Bend this weekend.

"We like to educate people about some Kansans who made great contributions but may not be household names," said Karen Neuforth, executive director of the Barton County Arts Council.

"It’s a memorial celebration, but it’s also black Kansans telling their stories in a new way," said Thelma Russi, president of the NAACP chapter in Great Bend.

The biennial festival started in 2001, when more than 1,000 people from 16 states gathered to celebrate the 80th anniversary of Micheaux’s death. A novelist, entrepreneur and the first black filmmaker, Micheaux’s gravesite is in the Great Bend Cemetery, where a memorial will take place Sunday.

“This is an opportunity to enjoy an informative time learning about music, art, poetry and film," Neuforth said. “I think the advantage is to show the kind of talents Kansas raised, but for whatever reasons they moved on to other places.”

A highlight of this year’s celebration will be guest speaker Lorenzo Fuller Jr., 88, who is returning to Kansas from New York City for the event.

Fuller, who became a Broadway star and the first black man with a show on network television, was raised in Stockton, graduated from the University of Kansas and attended the Juilliard School in New York City before rising to fame.

In the early days of television, Fuller hosted a musical show on NBC and was involved in hit TV show “The Jerry Lester Show” among others.

"Lorenzo Fuller is one guy who really never got his due," said Marty Keenan, a Great Bend attorney who helped coordinate the event.

He said Fuller won the “Major Bowes” amateur hour, which was like the “American Idol” of its time, before becoming a Broadway star.

Perry Lowery, also an entrepreneur, was a cornet player and bandleader for Barnum & Bailey shows.

Prof. Joanne Gabbin will talk about her friend Gwendolyn Brooks, the first black woman to receive a Pulitzer Prize for literature.

Langston Hughes, known for being a poet laureate of the Harlem Renaissance, will also be spotlighted.

“A lot of people don’t realize that Kansans pretty much built the Harlem Renaissance movement,” Keenan said. “These unsung heroes never really got the credit they deserved.”

“A remarkable number of African-Americans made great contributions in the arts—that’s really what we try to focus on.”

Keenan also noted KU professor and filmmaker Kevin Willmott is returning to the festival to speak and offer an exclusive sneak-peek at his new film, “Bunker Hill.” The film stars former “NYPD Blue” star James McDaniel, who met Willmott at the first Oscar Micheaux celebration in 2001 in Great Bend.

IF YOU GO...

What: 2007 Oscar Micheaux Celebration this weekend

Friday: 8 p.m., opening reception at Barton County Arts Center, 1401 Main St. South; 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., guest speakers Carmaletta Williams, Joanne Gabbin and Clifford Watson, Crest Theatre, 1905 Lakin Ave.; noon lunch at Jack Kilby Square; 3:10 p.m., Lorenzo Fuller Jr. and Angela Logan; 4 p.m. showing of Micheaux film, followed by panel discussion; 7 p.m. dinner at Barton County Arts Center, with filmmaker Prof. Kevin Willmott

Saturday: 11 a.m. memorial ceremony at Micheaux gravesite, Great Bend Cemetery, For more information, visit www.micheaux.org.
By JOHN HANNA
The Associated Press

LAWRENCE — Timothy Carr delivered his message with a matter-of-fact tone: The world is going to consume more energy; little of the electricity it will need will come from renewable resources, and much of that power will come from coal.

Carr, a senior Kansas Geological Survey scientist, spoke last week at a University of Kansas conference. His remarks came a day before former Vice President Al Gore received a Nobel Prize for his campaign on global warming and a day after environmentalists had denounced Sunflower Electric Power Corp.'s plan for two coal-fired power plants in southwest Kansas.

Some of the loudest criticism of Sunflower's proposal is heard from the city of Lawrence, and Carr seemed to sense that some audience members wouldn't like his assessment.

"Shoot the messenger," he said.

Sunflower's $3.6 billion proposal has put it at the center of a debate over carbon dioxide emissions and global warming. But another question is part of the discussion: whether Kansas needs as much capacity to generate electricity as Sunflower plans to build.

"When you combine the benefits of both conservation and wind and look at the current coal plants and nuclear plant that we have, my view is that there is a very limited need for additional capacity," said Carr.

Please see DEBATE, Page 6A
DEBATE
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

tional coal plants in the future,” Lt. Gov. Mark Parkinson, co-chairman of an energy policy council, said during a recent interview.

Sunflower is seeking an air-quality permit from the Department of Health and Environment, and Secretary Rod Bremby has said he will decide whether to grant it by the end of this month.

Environmentalists want Bremby to reject the permit over the plants’ CO2 emissions, even though the state doesn’t regulate the greenhouse gas, which most scientists see as a major contributor to global warming.

Many legislators, including Senate President Steve Morris and House Speaker Melvin Neufeld, are pressuring him to approve a permit, seeing the project as vital economic development.

The project would add two, 700-megawatt plants next to Sunflower’s existing 360-megawatt plant outside Holcomb, in Finney County. Construction on the second plant would be finished in 2013.

How big is the project? The total generating capacity of 1,400 megawatts would be enough to supply all of the households in Denver, Oklahoma City and Albuquerque, N.M., combined. Sunflower and a sister company, Mid-Kansas Electric Co., have 400,000 customers; together, the two have 1,200 megawatts of generating capacity.

SUNFLOWER POWER WOULD GO TO OTHER STATES

Sunflower would export much of the new power into other states and argues the new plants will lead to bigger transmission lines that could hook up to wind farms. Sunflower executives — and many legislators — have no doubt the power will be needed, both in rural Kansas and points well beyond.

“We’re entering into a time frame where energy growth is phenomenal,” said Sunflower spokesman Steve Miller. “It’s probably going to be a once-in-a-generation time when rural Kansas is going to benefit.”

The same growth in energy consumption is expected worldwide, something Carr noted in his conference presentation. The International Energy Agency projects that energy consumption will be 52 percent higher in 2030 than it was in 2004.

And, as Carr also noted, coal is expected to remain a big source, particularly as China, India and other developing nations attempt to catch up to an American or European standard of living.

Of course, that prospect raises fears about climate change. Bill Downey, president and chief executive officer of Kansas City Power & Light Co., said after his own conference speech, “We have to find a way to clean up
But at least a few environmentalists don’t accept Carr’s assessment of energy needs over the next few decades and believe conservation efforts can significantly slow any growth in energy demand.

Dan Nagengast, executive director of the Kansas Rural Center, said Americans shouldn’t assume that other nations will emulate the “gluttonous” U.S. lifestyle.

And, he said, legislators, utility executives and analysts aren’t considering the potential of homes and farms generating their own “off-grid” power from solar panels or windmills.

“Everybody’s defending a system,” Nagengast said. “There’s no thought in there that there’s other ways to be, other than, you know, a giant utility with giant coal plants and giant wind-turbine arrays.”

SOME QUESTION DESIRE
TO BUILD IN WEST KANSAS

Even participants in the debate who aren’t contemplating such a future question Sunflower’s desire to build so much coal-fired generating capacity and sell most of the electricity outside the state.

“Do we want western Kansas to be the place where every other state builds their coal-fired plants?” Parkinson said.

Miller said such arguments make him “almost livid,” adding that Sunflower wants to export power for the same reason Kansans export other products, such as aircraft.

And Jim Owen, a spokesman for the Edison Electric Institute, a trade group for investor-owned utilities, said assuming that a company will generate power only for customers within an assigned territory is an old business model.

“Increasingly, we’re moving to regional electricity markets,” he said. “Distinctions of this nature will become less important.”

Owen, Sunflower and others accept projections that Americans’ demand for electricity will grow enough that new coal-fired power plants must be built to keep up with it. Environmentalists aren’t likely to concede the point.

JOHN HAMM has covered Kansas politics and government since 1987.