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## EPA chief: Wyo. will remain energy king

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Wyoming will remain at the heart of the national energy production as the nation turns to cleaner energy solutions, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson said during a visit to Gillette on Thursday.

Her first visit to Wyoming illustrated the immensity and importance of domestic energy production.

State officials earlier said that Jackson's visit to Wyoming will help the energy dialogue between Wyoming and Washington, D.C., and put it in the context of the reality of energy production.

"I think the importance of it is that it demonstrates that the Obama administration is prepared to leave Washington, come out and see what's going on the ground," Gov. Dave Freudenthal said during a press conference in Gillette on Thursday. "That's an important part of trying to govern this country."

Jackson said it was her first visit to the Rocky Mountain area of the country beyond Denver. Her first visit to an operating coal mine impressed her with the immensity of mining operations in the Powder River Basin.

"Maybe I'm not the only one who needs to get out of Washington from time to time," she said. "A lot of times, EPA is much more interested in the generation of power from coal and it's very interesting for me to see the process in various parts of the country."

Jackson and Freudenthal toured a wind farm near Cheyenne on Wednesday. On Thursday, the team toured the Arch Coal-owned Black Thunder mine near Gillette before touring the Jonah Field natural gas drilling site near Pinedale.

Black Thunder produces upwards of 90 million tons of coal each year and the Jonah Field is estimated to have about 10.5 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.

Arch's Chief Executive Officer Steven Leer accompanied the team on the tour in the mine. Jackson and Freudenthal answered questions from local media representatives at the Gillette/Campbell County Airport after the mine tour. A handful of local residents and environmentalists attended the visit to mark a rare visit from an EPA administrator to Wyoming.

"This may not be a celebrity visit to lot of people in the country but it's a pretty big deal in Gillette," said Eric Barlow, Gillette resident and a member of the Powder River Basin Resource Council, a Sheridan-based environmental organization.

All the energy sources in Wyoming supply about 10 quadrillion British thermal units of energy to the country. But energy insiders fear that a proposed cap and trade system backed by President Barack Obama will cripple the national economy by attacking coal — the cheapest fuel in the country.

The system will force utilities to pay for each ton of emitted carbon dioxide to mitigate carbon pollution and to help boost renewable energy.

Jackson said she believes the system will work. As a market-based approach, it will give the economy some transitional time to rebound, she said.

"You have to find a way to make it work," she said. "With the right momentum, investment and continued work by the universities, it can be made to happen. But there needs to be a sustained signal over time that this country is going to fight carbon dioxide pollution."

Jackson also commended the state's efforts to address the nationwide environmental concerns that come with energy production and research in the area of carbon sequestration.

"I applaud the fact that the state is now looking at more than one single impact associated with energy production," she said. "We probably have disagreements, but one thing they are doing is they are clearly facing the issues that we have and they are getting data."



EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson talks during a press conference Thursday afternoon in Gillette after touring Black Thunder coal mine. Jackson is touring Wyoming energy projects this week with Gov. Dave Freudenthal. - News-Record photo by Nathan Payne

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