

Panda plant project to use local workers

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The Tri State Building and Construction Trades Council and Panda Culloden Power were expected to announce this morning an agreement giving local union construction workers a major role in building Panda's proposed natural gas-fired power plant at Culloden.

Gov. Bob Wise was expected to make the announcement at a ceremony at Cabell Midland High School.

"We're looking at about 1,000 union construction workers and 18 to 20 months to build the plant," said Amy Shuler Goodwin, Wise's press secretary. "It is obviously an enormous boost to the economy of this region."

The construction workers will be from West Virginia and nearby parts of Ohio and Kentucky, Shuler Goodwin said.

In addition, Panda estimates it will spend \$10 million to \$14 million to buy goods and services during the construction project, she said.

Panda is expected to pay more than \$3 million in new property taxes each year and expects to spend \$3 million to \$5 million in local services and products each year, Shuler Goodwin said.

The proposed 1,100-megawatt power plant at Culloden will cost \$400 million, Panda has said. Once finished, an average of 46 people are expected to work at the plant. Panda anticipates a \$2.3 million annual payroll.

Steve McAdams, Panda Energy International Inc.'s senior director of project development, said in March that the most visible features of the plant will be 65-foot-tall cooling structures. Perhaps the most unusual construction aspect is the need to build two 16-mile water pipes to the Kanawha River -- a 24-inch supply line and a 10-inch return line.

On a hot summer day, the plant will draw about 9.5 million gallons of water from the river, McAdams said.

Panda must receive approval from the state Public Service Commission before it can begin construction. A public hearing is scheduled May 29.