

Nuclear plant on horizon in Green River

By GARY HARMON, The Grand Junction Sentinel

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A company that hopes to build a nuclear plant in Utah is a step closer to the possibility of building it west of Green River.

Emery County has signed a development agreement with the Utah State Institutional and Trust Lands Administration that allows it to lease the state-owned lands for industrial uses.

Transition Power Development LLC, which hopes to build the nuclear reactor, can now open formal negotiations with the county, Transition Power CEO Aaron Tilton said.

The company has filed an application with the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission for what is tentatively called the Blue Castle Project. Many details remain to be worked out, Tilton said, including the location of such a plant.

“We still haven’t picked a site,” he said. The company is looking at locations on public and private land, he said, but has no interest in any property on the opposite side of the border.

“Colorado is not an option for us,” he said. Green River has been at the center of recent power-industry activity, some of which already has disappeared.

A Canadian company, Blue Rock Resources, had acquired Mancos Resources, which was planning to build a uranium mill in the Green River area. Blue Rock, however, decided in October against moving ahead with the uranium mill, Cary C. Martin of the company said.

Still, Green River has been “quite a hot spot” of late because of the potential of development in the industrial park, Emery County Commissioner Gary Kofford said. A couple of companies took a look at it in recent weeks, he said.

The idea of building a nuclear power plant near Green River is speculative at best, Kofford said. There has been talk as well of a coal-fired plant. “We’re open to that as well,” Kofford said.

Assuming that Transition Power nails down a site and is able to obtain water rights, the process of obtaining a permit will be extensive, Tilton said.

“We anticipate that if everything goes correctly, the application is a five-year process,” he said.

Construction could take five more years after that, he said.

Transition Power counts among its experts Tom Retson, who worked for 23 years in General Electric’s nuclear division; Nils Diaz, a former chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission; and Reed Searle, director of the Intermountain Power Agency, which generates coal power from plants in central Utah.

Transition Power’s “placeholder” application to the NRC was named Blue Castle for Blue Castle Butte in the nearby Book Cliffs