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HECA - Not perfect, but good overall

I just got an e-mail from the Sierra Club that called the HECA project a â€œtoxicâ€ â€œwater guzzlerâ€ . The Sierra Club has this one wrong. The HECA website gives a completely different story. As a safety and environmental engineer, I know that there is no better way to use fossil fuel than the process adopted by HECA. If we are to use fossil fuel at all, this is the way, and for the next several decades we must use fossil fuel for power, heating, and transportation. This is the best way to produce hydrogen, which is the only fuel that produces no CO2 during burning or during production of ammonia. There are no hydrogen wells in the US, so all hydrogen has to be produced from natural gas or carbon-based fuel. It is much better to use coal or coke in a clean way like HECA and allocate natural gas to other applications, such as power generation or vehicle fuel. Of course, there is no perfect energy source. The disadvantages of HECA are the cost of this process, and the fact that they start with more-or-less pure carbon in the form of coke. This means that water (H2O) must be added as a source of hydrogen. However, HECA says this water is brackish water and the process does not vent water in the form of a cooling tower cloud. I agree with the DOE -- the HECA project is a step toward cleaner, more efficient energy use.

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Registered Professional Engineer in California