Shell Again Delays Decision on Western Pa. Plant

BEAVER, Pa. (AP) — Shell Oil Co. has again delayed a decision on buying land in western Pennsylvania for a proposed multimillion-dollar petrochemical plant in Beaver County.

Officials announced Friday that Shell and Horsehead Corp. had signed another six-month extension on an option on the Potter Township site about 35 miles north of Pittsburgh.

The companies had signed a six-month extension at the end of last year for the site, which is now home to a zinc shelter that is expected to close.

The so-called cracker plant would convert natural gas liquids from the Marcellus Shale into more profitable chemicals such as ethylene, which is used to make plastics, antifreeze and other products.

Officials have said the plant would employ 100,000 temporary construction workers and provide 400 permanent jobs after that.

A Shell spokeswoman and government and civic leaders said the announcement is not a bad sign for the project. Spokeswoman Kimberly Windon said the company had intended to take years to evaluate the site.

"We're still on track. We're still continuing to evaluate the site," Windon said, noting that Shell is studying transportation to the site, working on government permits and communicating with people in the county.

The Pittsburgh Regional Alliance said in a statement that extending terms of a land option deal "is a routine aspect of this kind of ongoing evaluation." Gov. Tom Corbett, who says the plant could bring hundreds of jobs and provide work for thousands of construction employees, expressed support for the company "as it continues a deliberate evaluation of this project."

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