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By Jenny Lancour for the Daily Press

ESCANABA - The city of Escanaba has jumped a major hurdle toward a new power plant becoming reality. An important study recently determined a new facility would not be an environmental problem.

The Environmental Fatal Flaw Analysis (EFFA) began in August of 2005 and was completed by mid-December. RTP Environmental Associates Inc., of Cedarburg, Wis., compiled the study at a cost of \$50,000. "The purpose of the study was to determine if there was anything from an environmental standpoint to keep us from building a power plant in the size range of 57, 150, or 250 megawatts," said Robert Headden, the city's electrical superintendent.

The key concern for the EFFA study was whether or not any of the various-sized power plants would exceed emissions regulations for Seney Wildlife Refuge, a Class 1 area, Headden said. An environmental analysis determined that under the worst wind conditions, a plant as large as a proposed 250-megawatt plant would not exceed emissions standards for the area, he said. The study combined emissions from the potential plant and other sources in the Escanaba area including NewPage, he said. None of the impacts coming from Escanaba's direction was significant, Headden said. These emissions results, as well as a review of a new plant on area waters, will help pave the way toward an emissions permit from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, necessary to build a new plant, Headden said. Escanaba's proposals compared with other plants already permitted, he added.

"The results of the air emission study was that existing environmental controls we have today and...retiring the old plant, would allow us to build a plant at least 250 megawatts. The results were that we can proceed along the path to build that size of plant," Headden said.

"The EFFA was probably the biggest potential hangup in keeping it from moving forward," Headden added. "This one step is probably the most important step."