

STEP SCO2 10 MW Demonstration Plant Update

Jeff Moore, Ph.D.

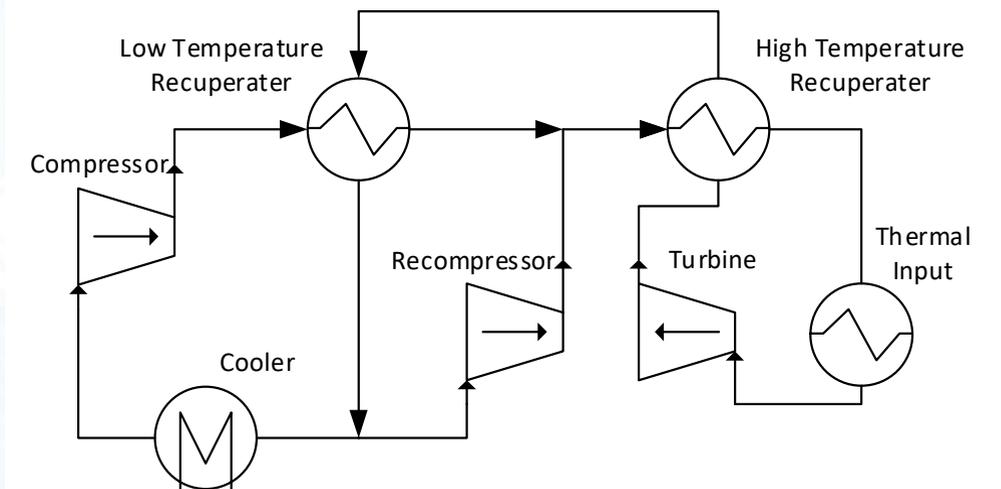
Institute Engineer and STEP PI
Machinery Department
Southwest Research Institute

IPER Workshop 2026
Feb 10-11, 2026

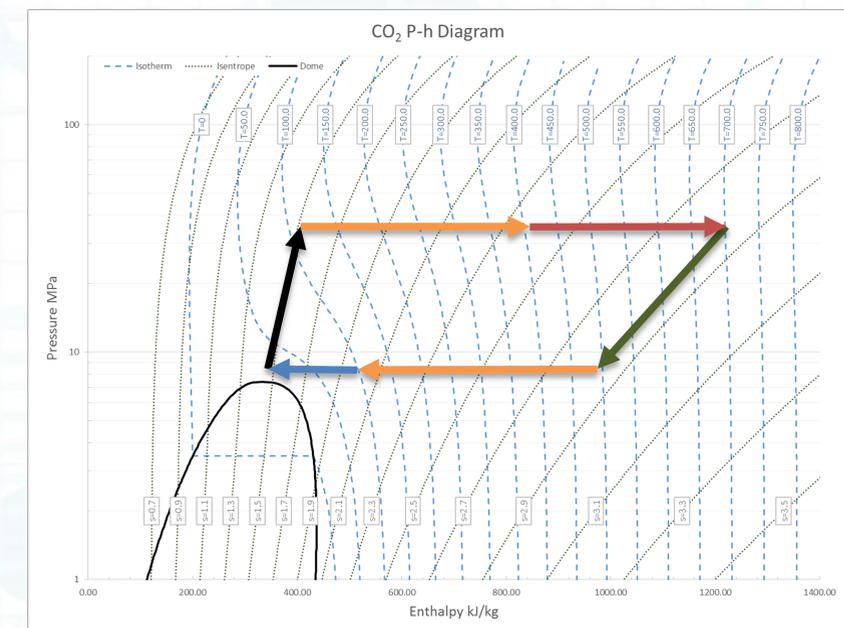


Supercritical Carbon Dioxide (sCO₂) Cycles

- Investigated since early 1900s, revisited since 1999, enabled by new technologies
- Favorable fluid properties:
 - Inert
 - Non-toxic at low concentrations
 - Unfreezable above 5 atm
 - Thermally stable at temperatures up to 1700 °C
 - High density → turbine power density ~10x steam turbines
 - High thermal conductivity, low viscosity → compact heat exchangers
 - Critical temperature near ambient
- No “boiler” → eliminates staffing requirements
- Potential for lower \$/kW due to higher efficiencies, power densities,
- STEP 10 MWe Demonstration achieved Simple Cycle operation Sep 2024

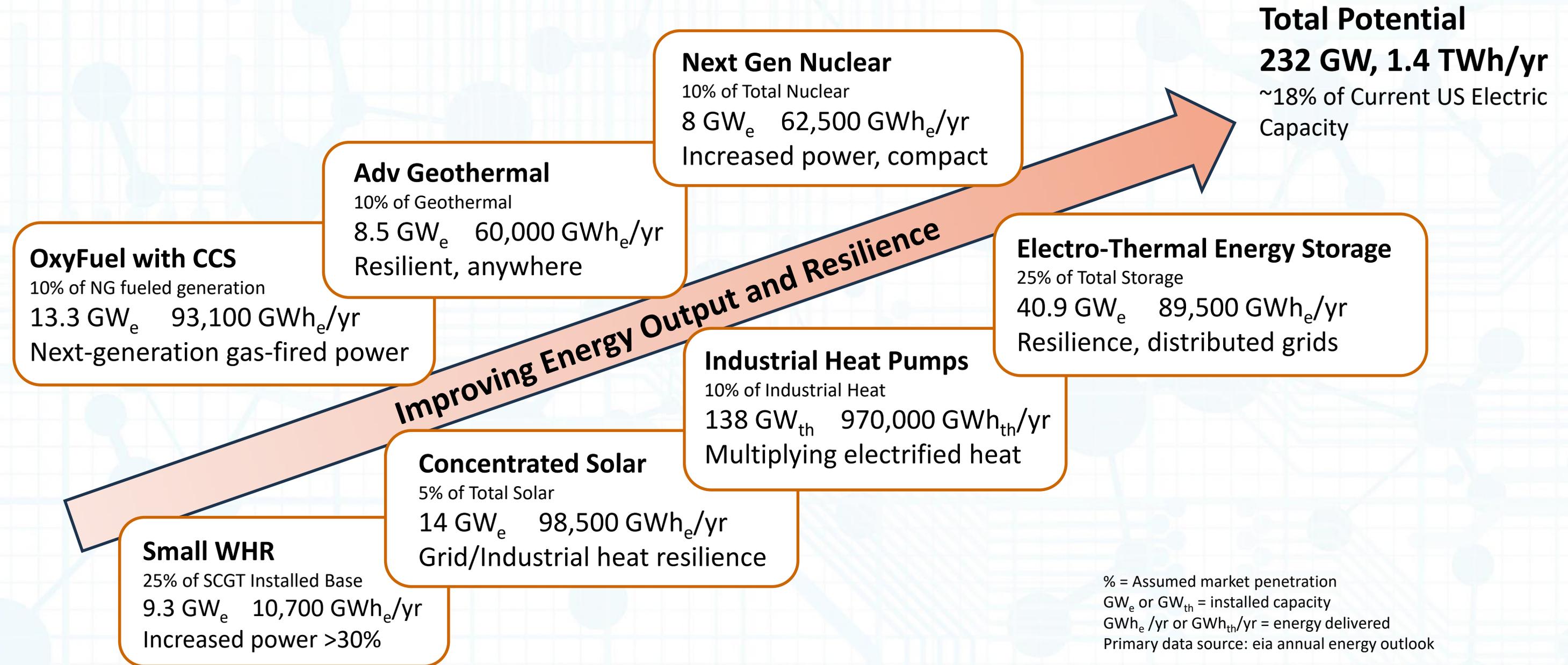


Recompression Brayton Cycle achieving ~50% thermal efficiency over ~700 °C turbine Inlet



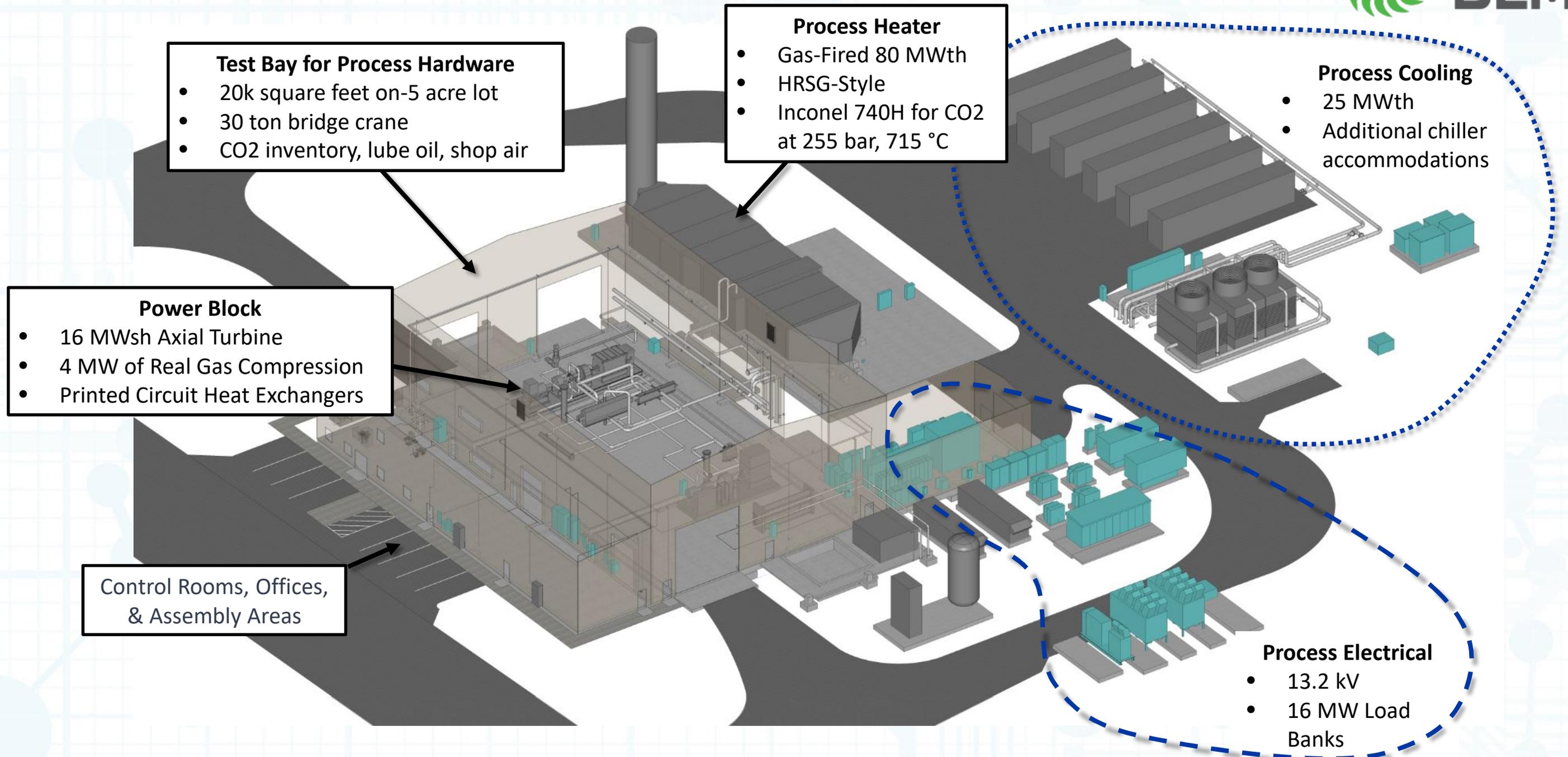
sCO₂ Applications – Unleashing Energy Innovation

Potential U.S. Electric and Energy Impacts by 2050



% = Assumed market penetration
GW_e or GW_{th} = installed capacity
GWh_e /yr or GWh_{th}/yr = energy delivered
Primary data source: eia annual energy outlook

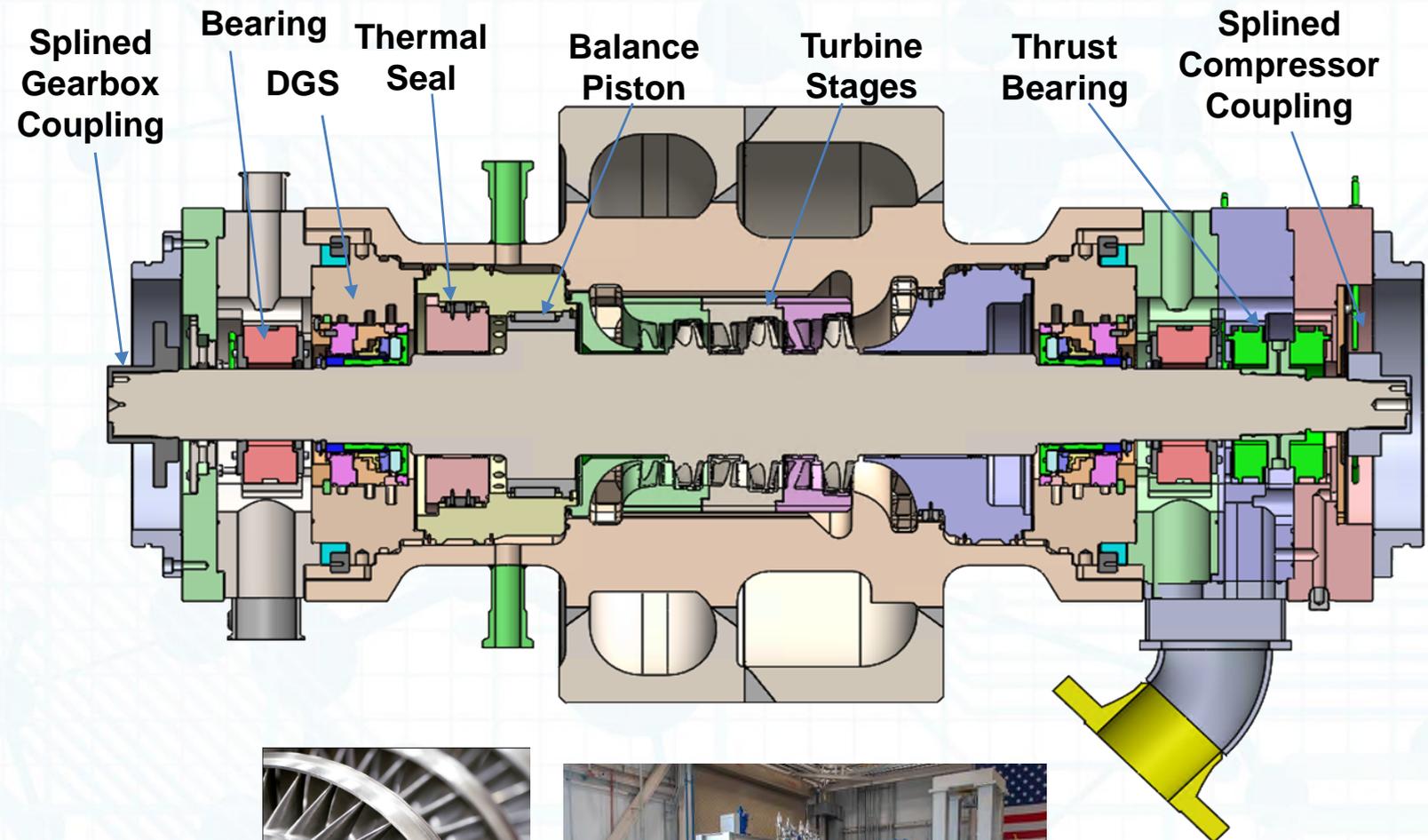
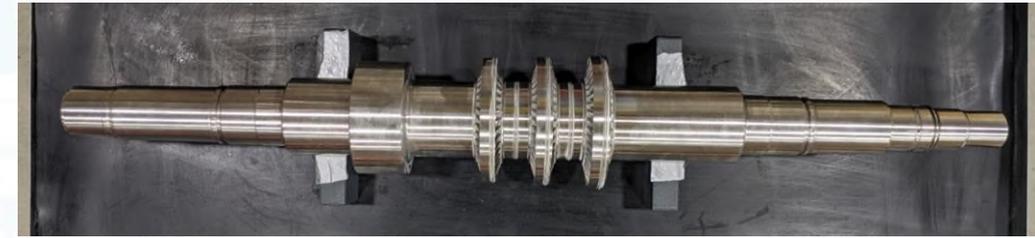
STEP Facility Layout & Specifications



MECHANICAL ENGINEERING

STEP Turbine Achievements

- ~1/10 the size of an equivalent steam turbine
- The world's highest power density industrial terrestrial turbine
- 16 MW (21,000 hp) produced by 86 kg (190 lb) rotor (186 kW/kg)
- Made from Nimonic 105 heat treated forging
- Airfoil shapes cut using a 5-axis electrode discharge machining (EDM) by Baker Hughes

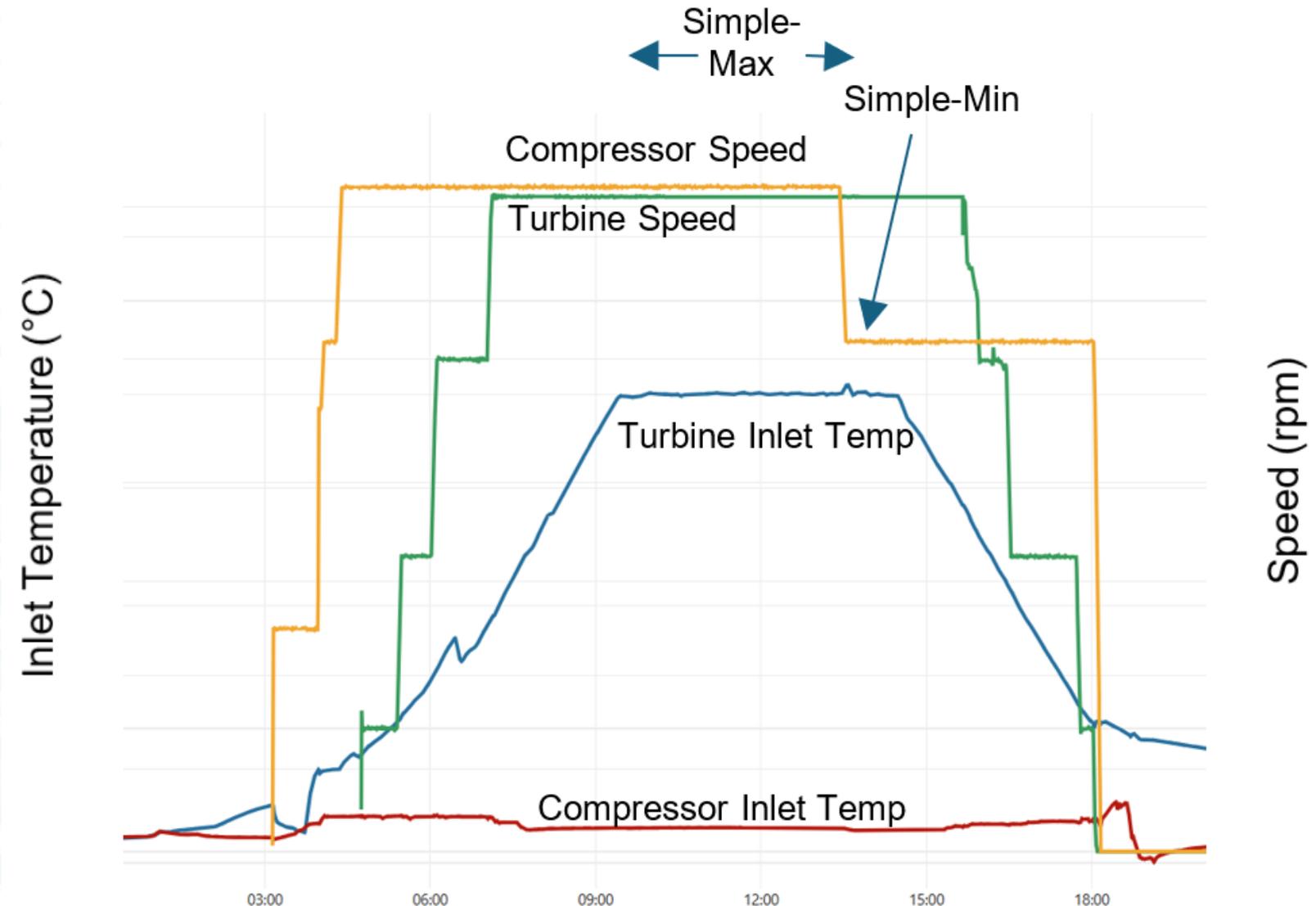


MECHANICAL ENGINEERING

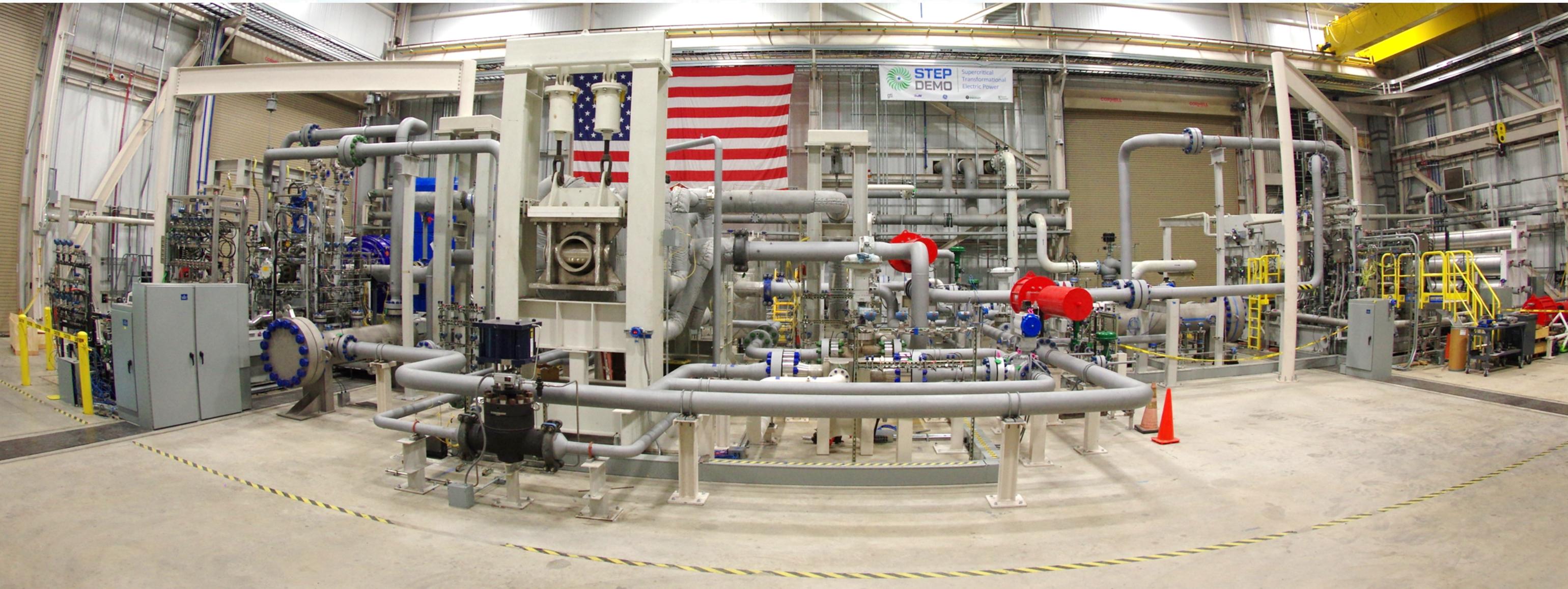
6-hour Performance Test

- NOx emissions test performed
- Both Simple Cycle maximum and minimum power conditions demonstrated
- No trips

Parameter	-	Simple-Min	Simple-Max
Normalized Efficiency		0.874	0.950
Aero Power	MWsh	4.57	8.25
Net Plant Output	MWe	2.26	3.93



Current Photo with RCBC Pipe Installed



Conclusions

- sCO₂ systems have progressed through many component and now system development activities to increase technology readiness level
- STEP 10 MWe demonstration has advanced simple recuperated sCO₂ cycles up to 500°C generating 4 MWe to the Texas grid
- Plant has been reconfigured for RCBC configuration
- RCBC Test goal includes 250 bar, 715°C and 10 MWe output



**Achieved Simple Cycle Conditions
on Sept 26, 2024**

www.STEPdemo.us