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STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS: FUTURE RESEARCH

Collaborative R&D with NETL

The National Energy Technology Laboratory (NETL) is placing an enhanced focus on strategic partnerships with industrial entities, NGOs, academia, et al. The initiative is designed to promote ready access to the research competencies that reside across the laboratory's research campuses in Albany, OR; Morgantown, WV; and Pittsburgh, PA. NETL's competencies transcend energy-related themes and include energy conversion, materials engineering and manufacturing, subsurface systems, decision science and analysis, and systems engineering and integration. Resulting partnerships can be multifaceted where the NETL engineers and scientists conduct contracted R&D or undertake research that complements a given partner's activities. NETL is also positioned to broker collaborative research by providing ready access to data and analyses that are of mutual interest to multiple organizations. Additional information about partnering with NETL to advance sustainable energy solutions for America is available at <http://netl.doe.gov/research/on-site-research/partnering-with-us>

Research Projects with NIOSH

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) is seeking technical input from stakeholders in the area of mine ventilation. A new research project will be beginning soon and the researchers at NIOSH's Pittsburgh Mining Research Division are reaching out to groups and individuals from a variety of backgrounds to help us plan occupational safety and health research for the mining sector in ventilation. Typically we seek input from academia, industry representatives, worker-related organizations, researchers, federal and state representatives, and others. The research area of ventilation also includes methane control which usually involves the extraction of coalbed gas. If you have an interest in discussing these efforts, please contact Tom Dubaniewicz or Steve Schatzel with the contact information given below. And thanks in advance for your participation.

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THE CASE FOR FOSSIL FUELS

According to Scientific America, there are about 1.5 billion people in the world or about 20 percent of the world's population that are without electric power concentrated mainly in Africa and Southern Asia. The number does not include billions of people with only intermittent electricity. The world population is expected to grow by another billion people by 2030. (www.statejournal.com August 5, 2015 pg.10) The fossil fuel industry produces more than 80 percent of the world's power. It is the only industry that knows how to produce cheap, plentiful, reliable energy for electricity, transportation and heating on a scale of billions. Since the energy industry is the industry that powers every other industry, the fossil fuel industry increases and prosperity productivity in every area of life from agriculture to zoology and provides electricity twenty-four hours a day seven days per week.

If we look at fossil fuel energy by the standard of human progress, we discover that it is not an immoral product we need to restrict but a moral product we need to liberate. Any restrictions on the use of fossil fuels does devastating damage and puts more people into poverty in the USA and around the world. (The Northeast ONG Market August/September 2016 p. 8)

THE MESSY BUSINESS OF CLEAN POWER: RENEWABLE ENERGY HAS A HIDDEN COST

The global effort to combat climate change already maybe going of the rails.

Germany, Europe's champion for renewable energy with highest electricity costs, seems to be having second thoughts about its ambitious push to ramp up its use of renewable fuels for power generation. The country has dropped subsidies for renewable energy because they make it hard for other, more reliable power sources to compete. Germany has also dropped the time table to end coal fired generation, which still accounts for over 40 percent of its electricity. The government will pay billions to keep coal generation in reserve, to provide emergency power when the wind does not blow and the sun does not shine.

In South Australia, where the wind supplies more than a quarter of the regions power, the spiking prices of electricity when the wind wasn't blowing, pushed the state government to ask the power company, Engie, to switch back to the gas fired plant that has been shut down.

In California, they are expected to get half of their electricity from renewables by 2030. As more and more solar capacity is fed into the grid, it will displace alternatives. The problem is that nuclear reactors, and even gas-and coal-fired generators, cannot switch themselves on and off instantaneously. Considering how expensive wind and solar farms can be, it might make sense to consider a strategy that could provide power generation all the time. What happens when the world discovers that the renewables cannot do the job alone? (New York Times July 20, 2016 p. B1, 4)

REGULATION OF RENEWABLE METHANE SOURCES

California Air Resource Board is worried that its climate change agenda could be jeopardized by cow manure and "enteric fermentation" (flatulence) which accounts for half of the state's methane emissions. Democratic lawmakers want to mandate a 40 percent reduction of methane by 2030 and the board is pondering the ways to do it. The board suggests that the dairy farms purchase technology to capture methane and then sell bio gas to the consumers. Yet, the regulators acknowledge that most ideas involve environmental tradeoffs and are not cost effective without substantial government subsidies and regulatory credits that can be sold to fossil fuel producers. (The Wall Street Journal August 13-14, 2016 p. A12)