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Volume 5, Issue 24

● Welcome



Welcome to Volume 5, Issue 24 of *Currents*. Have you participated in our surveys? Check out the newest question below.

[Nicholas S. Preservati](#)
Co-Chair, Spilman's [Energy Practice Group](#)

● [China to Build the First Small Modular Nuclear Reactor – Of Course](#)

"It will be China's own Linglong One design, it will be about 125 MW, it will take about 5 years to build, and it will generate about a billion kWh/year."

Why this is important: Small modular nuclear plants, with standardized designs, default safety systems and smaller footprints, are a promising method of generating zero carbon energy, and are a natural adjunct to intermittent renewables like wind and solar. China is taking the lead in developing and siting these sorts of reactors, which could be an important export if they catch on. If the U.S. public moves past its fear of nuclear energy and embraces these flexible, lower cost energy sources, they could be an important source of energy and manufacturing jobs in the years to come. --- [David L. Yauss](#).

● [Vistra Moving Zimmer Coal-Fired Plant Closure Up to May 2022](#)

"The Texas-based utility owner was going to close the Moscow, Ohio facility no later than 2027 based mainly on environmental regulations."

Why this is important: A large Ohio coal-fired electrical generation plant is closing due to an inability to sell its power into the PJM interconnect regional power auction. The Zimmer Plant originally was planned to be a nuclear plant that was never completed. It opened as coal-fired and now will close next year -- five years early -- as it's not able to sell the power it generates. Coal-fired generation is now being displaced by both lower cost natural gas-fired generation and renewables. These market forces, including power market auctions, are causing coal plants to close at a much faster rate than originally planned. --- [Mark E. Heath](#)

● [CNX Releases 2020 Corporate Responsibility Report and Announces Industry-Leading Net Carbon Negative Position](#)

"The report details company execution in line with the traditional Global Reporting Initiative core option, along with additional disclosure standards established by the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures and Sustainability Accounting Standards Board."

Why this is important: The ESG initiative of CNX Resources Corporation is an excellent example of the need to publicize the positive impact of the natural gas industry on long-term environmental and social goals in the United States. Responsible natural gas producers such as CNX play a significant role in decreasing our country's carbon footprint while providing good paying and stable employment in an economy ravaged by COVID-19. At a time when it's easy to criticize natural gas simply because it is a fossil fuel, the industry must continue to publicize its contributions to a cleaner environment and healthier economy. --- [William M. Herlihy](#)

● [Energy Act Could Mean Funding for Abandoned Mines, Jobs for West Virginia](#)

"It will cost an estimated \$11.3 billion to reclaim all of the abandoned mine lands across the United States, according to federal data."

Why this is important: The new infrastructure bill pending in Congress could result in significant reclamation of abandoned mines in the U.S. The current bill proposes to spend \$11.3 billion to employ laid off miners to reclaim abandoned mines. The original Abandoned Mine Lands program created in 1977 has reclaimed 46,000 mine openings and more than 1,000 miles of highwalls. However, the new spending may not be enough. Environmental groups believe the true cost to clean up all abandoned sites could hit \$20 billion. --- [Mark E. Heath](#)

● [Mercedes-Benz to Spend \\$47 Billion to Speed Conversion to Electric-Only Lineup](#)

"It plans to build eight battery plants in the process and launch three new battery-only vehicle platforms in 2025."

Why this is important: Mercedes-Benz says it will develop only plug-in electric vehicles after 2025, but that doesn't mean it will sell only those vehicles after that date. It will continue to manufacture internal

combustion energy cars, but R&D money will go only into electric vehicles. To do that, it intends to build more battery plants, but a question remains -- where will those battery components come from? As GM has discovered, developing a secure supply chain requires effort. --- [David L. Yaussy](#)

● **Biden Administration to Reverse Trump-Era Coal Wastewater Rule**

"The EPA plans to enforce tougher regulations for the disposal of wastewater from coal-fired power plants, but it could take years before the new rule goes into effect."

Why this is important: The Biden administration plans to rewrite wastewater rules for coal-fired electrical generation plants in the next three years. The plan will require steam power electrical generation plants to treat wastewater discharges of heavy metals. Environmental groups challenged a Trump administration rule that lessened treatment requirements. While the new administration could have pushed for the old rules to be reinstated, it instead wants to develop new science-based water treatment standards. The new rules will increase the cost of coal-fired electrical generation and likely will result in power plants closing before the end of their useful lives rather than upgrade their wastewater treatment systems. --- [Mark E. Heath](#)

● **General Motors Moves to Secure Its Own Critical Mineral Supply Chains**

"The move indicates the increasing importance of critical minerals to auto-makers entering the electric vehicle market, and further highlights the security of supply chains that power the energy transition – EV components especially."

Why this is important: General Motors is taking action to secure its supply chain for the electric vehicles it plans to produce. The supply of rare earth minerals needed for batteries is disproportionately coming from China and other countries, making their availability inherently uncertain. Even if sourced within the U.S., or friendlier countries like Canada or Australia, the competition for battery raw materials is going to intensify in the coming years. Car companies may find production constrained by battery shortages, not unlike the current chip shortage that has reduced new car production. --- [David L. Yaussy](#)

● **Energy Question of the Week**

Last Issue's Question and Results

How familiar are you with the "social cost of carbon" concept?

Very familiar - 36.8%
Moderately familiar - 33.8%
Not at all familiar - 29.4%

How long since the windows in your house have been replaced?

Less than 5 years ago

Select

6-15 years ago

Select

16-25 years ago

Select

More than 25 years ago

Select

Do not know

Select

● EIA Energy Statistics

Here is a round-up of the latest statistics concerning the energy industry.

PETROLEUM

[This Week in Petroleum](#)

[Weekly Petroleum Status Report](#)

NATURAL GAS

[Short-Term Energy Outlook - Natural Gas](#)

[Natural Gas Weekly Update](#)

[Natural Gas Futures Prices](#)

COAL

[Short-Term Energy Outlook - Coal](#)

[Coal Markets](#)

[Weekly Coal Production](#)

RENEWABLES

[Short-Term Energy Outlook](#)

[Monthly Biodiesel Production Report](#)

[Monthly Densified Biomass Fuel Report](#)

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