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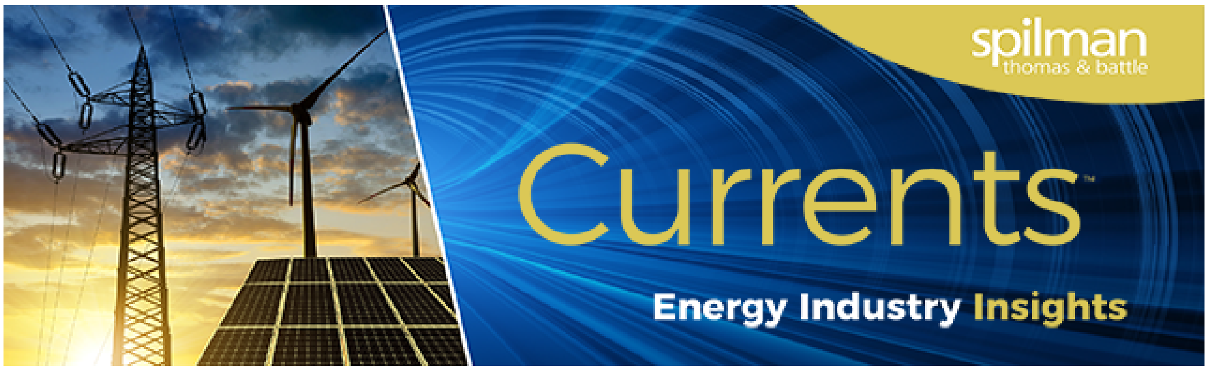

Issue 42, 2020

Feds Sued for Easing Regulations on Coal Ash

"'Many power plants could easily adopt affordable technologies that dramatically reduce toxic discharges, but with this rule, the EPA is telling their polluter friends not to bother with these common-sense measures.'"

Why this is important: A number of environmental groups have sued the Environmental Protection Agency over new environmental regulations the groups claim lessen protections for coal fly ash ponds. Coal ash typically is mixed with water in disposal ponds to prevent it from being spread by wind. The suit, if successful, could increase costs significantly for coal-fired electrical generation plants that are under heavy economic cost pressures in today's declining electric markets. --- Mark E. Heath

Energy Group Equinor Aims for Net Zero Emissions by 2050

"Norwegian energy company Equinor aims to become a net zero emitter of greenhouse gases by 2050, including emissions from the production and final consumption of oil and gas, its new chief executive said."

Why this is important: Equinor (formerly Statoil) recently has become a corporate leader in sustainability, regardless of industry. However, netting zero emissions by 2050 is a lofty target, especially for a company that contributed 0.52 percent of global industrial greenhouse gas emissions from 1988 to 2015. In the short-term, Equinor has no plans to abandon its onshore U.S. shale oil and gas operations, but investment and utilization of wind power and carbon capture and storage show strong long-term "climate ambitions" and a commitment to continuing leadership in sustainability. --- Joseph C. Unger

How the Data Revolution is Driving Change at Electric Utilities

"Wind turbines and solar panels may be the outward signs of change, but internally data is a mighty force."

Why this is important: "Data is said to be the new oil. The world now runs on it." From the adoption of smart meters to the creation of smart cities, data is taking a commanding role in the way electricity is delivered and utilized. However, to maximize its benefit, utilities need to have data that is "actionable instantly, with near-zero latency," and this, the article tells, is where broadband private networks help. Recently, Anterix, a broadband private network innovator, is building a private communications network for utilities, oil refiners, and others. Anterix's President and CEO explains the value such a network brings: "A utility using a broadband private network can know of a line break and de-energize it in just under 1.4 seconds or before the line hits the ground." --- Nicholas P. Mooney II

Insurance Company Seeking Collateral from Peabody to Cover the Coal Miner's Cleanup Bonds

"In a lawsuit filed by Argonaut Insurance Co., the company says it has issued over $202 million in surety bonds to Peabody-associated entities around the globe."

Why this is important: Argonaut Insurance Company has sued Peabody over demands the coal company post more collateral for environmental bonds. Citing Peabody's declining financial condition, the insurance company wants $128 million more in collateral on top of the $75 million Peabody posted recently. Argonaut says it has $202 million in bonds posted for Peabody around the world. Declining coal prices and mine closures continue to put pressure on environmental bonds designed to ensure coal companies reclaim mine sites and treat water being discharged from mine sites as necessary. --- Mark E. Heath

An $11 Trillion Global Hydrogen Energy Boom is Coming. Here's What Could Trigger It

"The Advanced Clean Energy Storage project in Utah aims to build the world's largest storage facility for 1,000 megawatts of clean power, partly by putting hydrogen into underground salt caverns."

Why this is important: A major issue with renewable energy is the inability to store it when demand is low. Right now, fossil fuels are preferred because they are much easier to store until demand increases. Mass storage of hydrogen will help bridge the practicability gap with fossil fuels and will be essential to meeting the estimated demand of 22 million to 41 million metric tons per year by 2050—up from 10 million today. --- Joseph C. Unger

Putin Pledges Russian Superiority in the Arctic with New Icebreakers

"Moscow has stepped up its efforts to tap the region's commercial potential, including by increasing freight traffic on the Northern Sea Route, which runs from Murmansk in the Russian Arctic to the Bering Strait near Alaska."

Why this is important: An economic and territorial battle is being waged in the Arctic, the principal players being the United States, Norway, Canada, China, and Russia, but Russia may be leading the way. The article details Russia's efforts at controlling freight transport and trade in and through the Arctic, including new investment in a modernized icebreaker fleet touted by Putin as a reflection of Russian "superiority" in the Arctic. This follows Russia's renewed efforts to re-establish its military presence throughout the Arctic. As the article suggests, what is at stake are the "energy-rich" resources abounding in the Arctic, including significant undiscovered oil and natural gas. --- Derrick Price Williamson

Australian Coal Congestion in China has Increased, Following China's Unofficial Ban on Australian Coal Imports

"The Capesize average earning fell significantly to USD15,715/day on 2nd November, down almost 55% from USD34,896/day almost a month ago."

Why this is important: Australian coal is still being hurt by a dispute with China that has caused China to reduce coal imports. Due to Chinese restrictions, on November 2, there were 8.7 million tons on ships off the Chinese coast. That broke down as 6.3 million tons of metallurgical coal and 2.4 million tons of steam coal. It is forecast China will import 5 to 20 million fewer tons of coal this year and 2021 numbers will be similar. --- Mark E. Heath

Baker Hughes to Acquire Carbon-Capture Company

"Baker Hughes plans to acquire a carbon-capture company as more oil and gas companies look to reduce carbon emissions to address climate change."

Why this is important: Carbon capture ("CC") technologies can be used to keep the carbon dioxide produced by major factories and power plants from reaching the atmosphere and contributing to global heating. There are only about 20 CC projects operating commercially, mainly in the U.S., Canada, Norway, and China, and Baker Hughes is trying to get a piece of this ever-expanding pie. According to the International Energy Agency, CC projects could reduce global carbon dioxide emissions by almost one-fifth and reduce the cost of tackling the climate crisis by 70 percent. --- Joseph C. Unger

Energy Question of the Week

Last Week's Question and Results

What type of vehicle fuel do you use?

87 Octane Regular - 41.2%
89 Octane Plus - 8.8%
92 Octane Premium - 26.5%
E-85 Ethanol - 5.9%
Diesel - 11.8%
Electric/Hydrogen/Natural Gas - 5.9%

How many miles do you drive per week?

Less than 50

Select

51-100

Select

101-250

Select

251-500

Select

Over 500

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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