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October 26th, 2012  
12:03 PM ET

## Can natural gas live up to potential?

On "Fareed Zakaria GPS" this Sunday at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. ET – debating the natural gas boom.

By Peggy Williams, Special to CNN

*Editor's note: Peggy Williams is editorial director of Hart Energy, an energy publisher that advises natural gas companies. The views expressed are her own.*

As nations seek alternative fuel sources in an effort to reduce petroleum use, the world is paying increasing attention to natural gas as an efficient option. Multi-stage fracturing and horizontal drilling have allowed natural gas supply to grow in North America, and if these techniques continue to be implemented, the door will be open for a number of countries to start producing potentially vast amounts of energy.

Consider Russia, which has the largest amount of recoverable natural gas in the world – more than **4,500,000 billion cubic feet** of natural gas, not including potential undiscovered resources in the region. Between Russia and Siberia, there's a mean of **1,385,046 billion cubic feet** of undiscovered natural gas, offering impressive potential for expansion.

The United States, while not comparable in size to Russia, still has much to gain from a potential domestic energy increase. The U.S. places after Russia as having the second-highest amount of recoverable natural gas available. **Shale gas**, which is natural gas trapped in fine-grain sedimentary rocks, makes up about a quarter of these resources.

It's true that there has been controversy over shale, with some critics pointing to what they claim are the adverse side effects of the so-called fracking drilling process used to tap natural gas, such as the release of methane.

However, supporters point to the huge potential – the **Eagle Ford Shale** in Texas, for example, was responsible for nearly 327.5 **billion cubic feet** of natural gas production in 2011. From January to July 2012 alone, over 182 billion cubic feet were produced.

But this general need for energy – total consumption of natural gas in May of this year, for example, was 1,850,000 million cubic feet – is entwined with a need to keep prices down, something that is likely to propel the continued pursuit of shale gas resources. Indeed, an **MIT study** found that under one scenario without shale gas, gas prices could increase five-fold compared with the current price by 2050. This compares with a rough doubling of gas prices over the same period if shale gas is in the picture.

The debate over extraction techniques aside, one thing is clear – an increased natural gas supply could help lessen the country's dependence on foreign energy sources, especially considering that **94 percent** of the 2011 natural gas

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consumed in the U.S. was produced domestically. Could the levels of shale gas available in the United States result in a situation where the U.S. consumes less natural gas than it is able to produce?

As the **most common type** of recoverable, unconventional gas, shale gas is found across the globe. Such resources could help fuel the Chinese economy, reduce energy imports into Europe, and allow the U.S. to play more of a role in gas exportation. The potential for natural gas to change the world therefore seems stunning. The question is whether the United States (and other countries) will do what is necessary to reap the rewards of economy it promises.

Post by:  
**CNN's Jason Miks**

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soundoff (40 Responses)

### ronwagn

Natural gas is the future of energy. It is replacing dirty, dangerous, expensive coal and nuclear plants. It is producing the electricity for electric cars. It will directly fuel cars, pickup trucks, vans, buses, long haul trucks, dump trucks, locomotives, aircraft, ships, tractors, engines of all kinds. It will help keep us out of more useless wars, where we shed our blood and money. It lowers CO2 emissions. Over 2,300 natural gas story links on my blog. An annotated bibliography. The big picture of natural gas. Ron Wagner

October 26, 2012 at 2:07 pm | [Reply](#)

### jason

natural gas is far from the future of energy, it may seem like a short term fix, but in the end its just another non-renewable fossil fuel that does nothing to counteract any human-made greenhouse effect.

October 27, 2012 at 11:46 am | [Reply](#)

### memoe

Actually I contacted my local utility today to verify if natural gas CHP is considered a green energy system and they said absolutely, how many kwh's would you like to sell back to your local provider. Seems Solar or wind isn't providing the necessary carbon offsets required by federal law.

October 28, 2012 at 2:02 am |

### Param Lowe

Yes! I agree with you 😊 Fossil Fuel is just a short term fix..and as USA will leads in this.. the trend will be followed by countries world wide... Somehow world has to figure out Solar Energy combined with alternative modes like anti-gravity and effective fuel cell technology..and most desired \*prepetual motor\* is what will save us from Global Energy Crisis... Secondly fuel Industry thinks only in terms of profits, nobody thinks whether the on going fuel extraction from Earth, would imbalance the composition of Soil for agriculture/flora n fona and on larger view point the stability of the geological structure of Planet Earth?

October 29, 2012 at 6:58 am |

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**fareedzakaria**  
3:21 pm ET March 11, 2013  
RETWEET

Nearly 8 million Americans go to work every day yet still live below the poverty line: LA Times [lat.ms/WcjMaE](#)



**fareedzakaria**  
11:35 am ET March 11, 2013  
RETWEET

On GPS this week: Debating Keystone, and what comes after Chavez? This Sunday at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. ET on CNN



**fareedzakaria**  
12:26 am ET March 10, 2013  
RETWEET

As of February, U.S. faces a "jobs gap" of 10.2 million jobs: Brook [bit.ly/X46JelH](#)@BrookingsInstInst



**fareedzakaria**  
3:53 pm ET March 8, 2013  
RETWEET

Until 1966, more than 70% of Americans would tell pollsters they mostly trusted federal government. Today 26% do: Pew [bloom.bg/WxqFFP](#)



**fareedzakaria**  
11:02 am ET March 8, 2013  
RETWEET

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**ronwagn**

Solar and wind cannot meet base power needs for our economy. Not even close to being affordable. They are good though, if you want to pay triple.

November 2, 2012 at 11:36 am |

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**allenwoll**

ParamLowe - You mention,

" combined with alternative modes like anti-gravity and effective fuel cell technology..and most desired "prepetual motor" is what will save us from Global Energy Crisis " .

You need to take a High School Physics course !!!

November 19, 2012 at 1:29 pm |

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**Ciscokid**

What a bunch of non-sence! You don't know what the long term effects are, neither do the "scientist" since it is a "new" industry.

Where does all the Fracking sludge go after it's all said and done? Have you heard of the Louisiana sinkhole and the environmental catastrophe it posses?

This is just crazy!

November 24, 2012 at 8:14 pm | [Reply](#)

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**Roma**

Hey, Fareed, what was the purpose of you mentioning Russia in your so-called report?

If you want to explore natural gas -- go ahead and f\*\*\*g do it!!!

Stop counting someones else resources.

You should have mentioned Canada, because that's where USA is gonna steal natural gas.

Once again, Siberia loves American lairs -- it is such an entertainment.

October 26, 2012 at 5:26 pm | [Reply](#)

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**Nate**

What you talking about? There is a huge natural deposit that's stretches from southern ny to northern Virginia in the United States? We don't need Canadian natural gas or blood filled middle eastern oil? It's time to bring back the golden age where the United States was the top exporter.

November 25, 2012 at 3:11 am | [Reply](#)

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**Anne Ward**

Fareed Zakaria: Why, in discussing fracking, did you fail to mention that the water forced into the earth to extract gas, is infused with undisclosed chemicals, that could potentially contaminate our underground water supply?

October 27, 2012 at 10:23 pm | [Reply](#)

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**Liz Rosenbaum**

... and not one mention of the FRACAct! Nor the fact that regulation fails in all 31 drilling states... Shame.

October 28, 2012 at 7:13 am | [Reply](#)

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**Fedup**

To Ann Ward and Roma -- I'm curious why you blame Fared for this article? Did you miss the editorial note at the beginning?

By Peggy Williams, Special to CNN

Editor's note: Peggy Williams is editorial director of Hart Energy, an energy publisher that advises natural gas companies. The views expressed are her own.

November 25, 2012 at 10:38 am | [Reply](#)

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**memoe**

Until liberals figure out how to extract gravity and make it a renewable energy source they need to back off. They are smart enough to do it. Let's get er done! I don't see any liberals investing 6 to 8 us dollars per watt on solar systems at a 30+ year payback.

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**RSS**

 [RSS - Posts](#)

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October 28, 2012 at 2:28 am | [Reply](#)

**memoe**

Il think we need smarter liberals so they can explain how to get more output per input. Then we might have something that would reduce the worlds entropy.

October 28, 2012 at 2:46 am | [Reply](#)

**memoe**

If a liberal can't come up with an over unity energy source they will always be at a dissolution of the problem. What Liberals are demanding from everyone is OVER UNITY, PERPETUAL MOTION, at the same time they conclude can't be done because of the laws of thermodynamics.

October 28, 2012 at 2:53 am | [Reply](#)

**memoe**

Fact is if Liberals was so smart they would figure it out. output minus input @ a surplus. They still are unable. Even though they are the smartest intellectuals on the face of this planet.

October 28, 2012 at 2:57 am | [Reply](#)

**memoe**

MIT, Cambridge, Cato, Yale, Harvard, etc. should have figured out over-unity by now. Nope we are still a century behind in a century's time. And as long as they are held the standard we will continue that trend.

October 28, 2012 at 3:12 am | [Reply](#)

**Liz Rosenbaum**

All frack wellbore seals will deteriorate over time. It's that simple, Fareed. Even when sealed correctly, in 60-100 years, every last triple cement casing will fail. How will you protect the aquifers then? Whose gonna replug all those wells? And what will you say to your great-grandchildren when they learn, too late, that chemicals and radiation have leaked into their precious water supply?

It's frustrating how intellectually you approach reporting on Natural Gas as a potential "bridge fuel" while completely disregarding the people and ecologies routinely harmed by this massively industrial and polluting industry. Many Americans have been harmed by this form of extreme fossil fuel extraction. Please read their stories here next time you're tempted to tout gas so eagerly: [pennsylvaniaallianceforcleanwaterandair\[dot\]wordpress\[dot\]com/the-list/](http://pennsylvaniaallianceforcleanwaterandair[dot]wordpress[dot]com/the-list/)

October 28, 2012 at 7:07 am | [Reply](#)

**Dan Ceppa**

NG is "not" a bridge fuel. Not only is it more carbon intensive than coal, it has the added impact of greatly increasing methane emissions. Methane is a far more powerful greenhouse gas.

October 28, 2012 at 10:40 am | [Reply](#)

**JUST ME**

The gas companies aren't taking the proper precautions. Wells have exploded, waste water has polluted farm land and clean ponds. They have also sold rights to China/ it will be another Alaskan Oil lie.

October 28, 2012 at 1:52 pm | [Reply](#)

**DragonX**

No need for Natural gas. Try COLD FUSION. It just went online now in Italy:

<http://www.prometeon.it/prodotti.php>

October 30, 2012 at 4:28 pm | [Reply](#)

**EVN**

Pretty much absent from any discussion of energy policy is the idea of conservation and doing with less to begin with. NG will end up biting us in the backside as fracking disasters occur, and it is not the panacea its supporters tout it as being. Renewable energy is in its infancy and can be most effectively be used to augment the grid, but not drive it entirely. Nuclear is a disaster waiting to happen, and no matter what precautions are exercised, humans will make mistakes, or nature will at some point defeat even the most advanced protective systems, and when an accident happens the consequences can be catastrophic. So we need to learn to do more with less, and develop a comprehensive energy policy, instead of chasing whatever happens to be in vogue at the time as if it were the answer to our energy needs.

October 30, 2012 at 7:36 pm | [Reply](#)

**Isn2me**

natural gas industry will self-destruct. it is the dog eating it's own tail. the amount of fresh water required for hydraulic fracturing (fracking) is not available through our children's generation, unless we devolve to drinking gas instead of water. the disposal of poisoned, carcinogenic fracking waste water by injecting the millions upon millions of gallons of once precious fresh, life-giving water into deep underground remote spaces far from the fracking drill sites will continue to destabilize the earth's surface to the point where people will finally demand that men stop creating the earthquakes that have been rumbling under our feet, homes and fragile underground pipe infrastructures. random unleashed gases burping through porous soils will, even more often, impact not only wildlife, but human lives, in my opinion. it is past the time for us to support the renewable resource technologies.

October 31, 2012 at 2:07 am | [Reply](#)

**spent**

So glad I did not sell the mineral rights my father had in West Oklahoma...700,000,000 cub. ft. of natural gas is located and they are going after now. Fine with me.

November 23, 2012 at 3:43 pm | [Reply](#)

**ottoborden**

Reblogged this on Towards A Secular America and commented:

Shifting to natural gas is – unfortunately – the greenest alternative we have to coal at the moment. Solar and wind are still going to take some time to reach price parity with conventional fuels. Until then the alternative to using them is further imiseration of poor and middle class people under the yoke of ever rising energy prices and stagnating take home pay.

That and I'm a "climate agnostic".

November 24, 2012 at 4:29 pm | [Reply](#)

**Martin B.**

The ongoing pressure both by environmental activist groups and the public against the extraction and manipulation of non-traditional petroleum sources is a hindrance on economic prosperity. It is true that pollution is caused by the practice and there is still need of analysis in relation to long-term effects; however, this should not distract people from the final goal that domestic natural gas supplies. Independence from foreign energy sources. Though natural gas could never, realistically, replace gasoline; the application to certain areas of transportation could decrease nation-wide oil consumption and allow time for more permanent solutions to be properly applied.

December 5, 2012 at 7:11 pm | [Reply](#)

**Ei Alzenstat**

<http://trackingtomorrow.blogspot.com>

December 9, 2012 at 2:03 pm | [Reply](#)

**NATURAL|HEALTH**

That is very interesting. You are an overly skilled blogger. I have joined your feed and look forward to in the hunt for more of your magnificent post. Additionally, I've shared your site in my social networks

December 23, 2012 at 1:46 am | [Reply](#)

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