

NATURAL GAS:

Clean Energy to Keep America Going Strong

NPC: The Future of Natural Gas

A December 1999 study by the U.S. Department of Energy's National Petroleum Council, Meeting the Challenges of the Nation's Growing Natural Gas Demand, updates a 1992 study that found that sustained increases in natural gas use was desirable and feasible. Among the new study's findings:

Natural gas demand is estimated to grow by 30 percent or more over the next decade. The largest growth sector for gas will be electricity generation, accounting for about half of the demand growth.

- Of estimated new electricity generation capacity, more than 90 percent will be gas-fired.

There are plenty of natural gas deposits in this country but significant challenges will have to be met in bringing it to the surface, and delivering it to consumers.

- Access to these vast deposits
- Continued technological advancements
- Adequate financial performance and investment
- Skilled worker availability
- Expansion of the domestic drilling fleet
- Lead times for development

Access is crucial because much of the land or offshore regions under which these natural gas deposits lie have been placed off-limits or subject to significant restrictions.

- 100 percent offshore both coasts
- 56 percent of the eastern Gulf of Mexico
- 40 percent of the Rocky Mountain region

Comprehensive and coordinated federal policy and cooperative efforts by industry and other stakeholders can meet the challenges.