



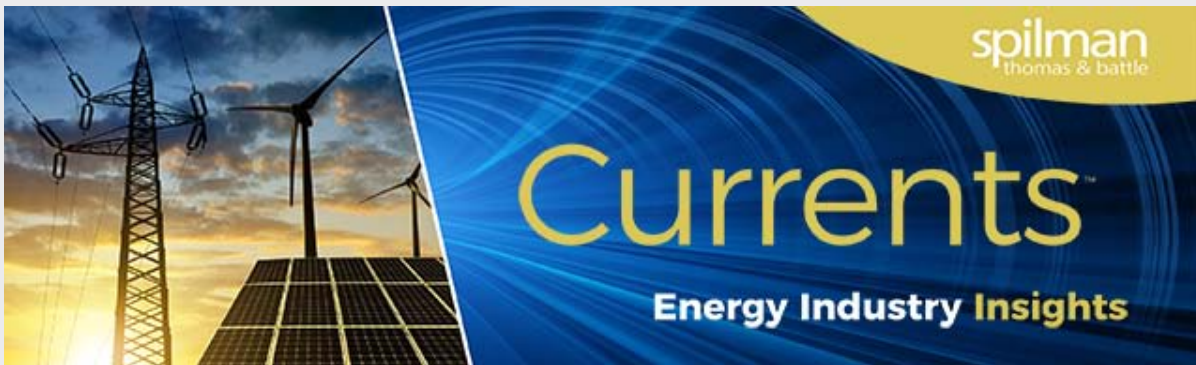
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Issue 42, 2019

### ● [FBI Eyes How Pennsylvania Approved Pipeline](#)

*"The FBI has begun a corruption investigation into how Gov. Tom Wolf's administration came to issue permits for construction on a multibillion-dollar pipeline project to carry highly volatile natural gas liquids across Pennsylvania."*

**Why this is important:** Just the allegation the Governor forced the environmental agency to issue the permits for the Mariner East pipeline will likely spur litigation from environmental groups seeking to have the permits revoked. The litigation may also involve a request for injunctive relief in order to halt operation of the pipeline until the permit issue is resolved. --- [Nicholas S. Preservati](#)

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### ● [U.S. Department of Labor Determines No U.S. Mining Operations Met Pattern of Violations Criteria for 5th Consecutive Year](#)

*"The POV provision in the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977 is one of MSHA's toughest enforcement tools."*

**Why this is important:** For the fifth straight year, no U.S. mines were found to have a Pattern of Violation status, according to the Mine Safety and Health Administration. MSHA also announced the rate of significant and substantial citations has declined from 32 to 21 percent in the past seven years. This reflects greater compliance by mining companies and safer workplaces. --- [Mark E. Heath](#)

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### ● [Putin & Xi to Launch Strategic Natural Gas Pipeline from Russia to China in December](#)

*"The project will deliver natural gas from the Russian regions of Yakutia and Irkutsk to domestic consumers in the Far East and then to China, a new foreign market for Gazprom."*

**Why this is important:** The USSR and China were allies, then enemies, and now are business partners in a pipeline bringing Russian gas to China, which is voraciously consuming all the energy it can get. It's a match made in heaven. Russia gets a secure connection to a reliable customer through a pipeline that does not cross any intervening countries that might later make trouble for it (e.g., Ukraine). China gets a steady supply of energy that burns cleaner than coal and can easily be moved to market. --- [David L. Yaussy](#)

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## ● [Germany Will Not Force Hard Coal Plant Closures Before 2026 - Draft Law](#)

*"A previous blueprint stipulated that utilities would be forced to deactivate hard coal power plants by 2026 if not enough closures happen voluntarily."*

**Why this is important:** Germany is considering a law that will delay closing all of its bituminous coal-fired electrical generation plants. The proposal would allow some plants to remain open if other plants close voluntarily. By 2022, 12 plants will have closed with the remaining 30 left providing approximate 15 GW of electricity. This change will allow the Datteln 4 GW plant to begin operations. Germany is working on a timetable to close its brown coal (lignite) plants. --- [Mark E. Heath](#)

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## ● [Renewables Growth, Market Changes Tanked Invenergy's Rhode Island Gas Plant, Regulators Say](#)

*"The Rhode Island Energy Facility Siting Board issued a final order denying a new gas-fired power plant proposed by Invenergy, pointing to lengthy delays in the proceeding that allowed market changes and the growth of renewable energy to overtake any need for the project."*

**Why this is important:** Opponents of a proposed new gas-fired power plant convinced regulators the need for the plant did not exist because of a significant increase in renewable resources and continued reductions in peak load due to energy efficiency measures. The growth of renewables, often as the low-cost resource, and ever-increasing advances in energy efficiency measures will continue to impact the cost effectiveness of more traditional forms of energy production. --- [Carrie H. Grundmann](#)

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## ● [U.S. Coal Producers Plow Ahead with New Mines as Market Slumps](#)

*"Arch Coal Inc. and Consol Energy Inc. remain on track to open new mines to dig steelmaking, or metallurgical, coal from the West Virginia hills."*

**Why this is important:** Despite the current slump in metallurgical coal pricing with a 30 percent decline, U.S. producers remain on track to add additional metallurgical coal mines. Arch hopes to open its Leer Mine expansion, adding three million tons, in the second quarter of 2021. CONSOL's new mine near Itmann, West Virginia also will be in full production by 2021. Contura is opening the Lynn Branch Mine to replace other mines that have closed. Warrior Met Coal is also considering a new mine, its Blue Creek project, but has not announced a final decision on construction. Permits will be in place next year. Metallurgical coal remains the strongest U.S. market. --- [Mark E. Heath](#)

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## ● [Dominion Virginia Plan for 1.5 GW New Peaking Capacity Will Lead to More Gas Plants, NGOs Fear](#)

*"Dominion Energy Virginia is seeking up to 1,500 MW of new dispatchable peak capacity beginning in 2022, to replace generation retirements and to provide system balancing needs for the company's growing renewables fleet."*

**Why this is important:** Dominion Energy is looking for a few natural gas peaker plants to back up its solar and wind generation when the sun isn't shining and wind isn't blowing. Peaker plants are those that can be called on, with little notice, to balance out fluctuations in supply on the electrical grid. The Sierra Club believes that back up should be provided by "affordable clean energy," although what that would consist of if not solar and wind is not clear. Dominion, which has to provide electricity to customers in the real world, balances its renewables with fossil fuels, the only cost-effective option currently available. --- [David L. Yaussy](#)

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## ● [Coal on the Precipice](#)

*"As the policy director for Climate and Energy Economics at the Brookings Institution, Morris has meticulously researched the economic outlook of coal-reliant jurisdictions throughout the country this year, including in Wyoming."*

**Why this is important:** The Powder River Coal Basin continues to be stressed by declining use of steam coal for electrical generation in the United States. The Wyoming Legislature is looking at a bill that would require its Public Service Commission to consider socio-economic factors associated with the early retirement of coal-fired power plants in the state. In the past quarter, the Powder River Basin had its lowest coal production in 20 years. The Basin had record production of 409 million tons in 2007. Production is now about 200 million tons. The ongoing decline in production is likely to continue according to experts and is not expected to reverse itself. --- [Mark E. Heath](#)

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## ● [How to Reach U.S. Net Zero Emissions by 2050: Decarbonizing Transportation](#)

*"Decarbonizing the transportation sector is crucial to achieving the Paris Agreement's goals: The U.S. transportation sector was responsible for over a quarter (27%) of 2018 U.S. GHG emissions."*

**Why this is important:** More than a quarter of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions are from the transportation sector. According to this analysis, achieving a zero carbon future by 2050 will require phasing out new petroleum-fueled cars and SUVs immediately, as well as extensive changes to land use, zoning and transportation, and a mandate for fuel cells in larger trucks. It also assumes huge changes in the amount of electricity used and how it is generated. Much can happen in 30 years, but this would be a huge economic and social change for the U.S. to absorb. --- [David L. Yaussy](#)

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## ● [EIA Energy Statistics](#)

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

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