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## Issue 30, 2020

### ● [China's New Coal Projects Make Up 90% of Global Total for First Half of 2020: Study](#)

*"Global coal-fired generation capacity saw a net decline of 2.9 gigawatts from January to June, the first drop on record for a six-month period, thanks to plant retirements in Europe and elsewhere."*

**Why this is important:** While pledging to reduce CO2 emissions, China continues to build new coal-fired electric generation plants. Ninety percent of new coal-fired generation plants scheduled to be built in the world are in China – 53.2 GW of new plants are planned. (For comparison, some of the largest U.S. coal-fired generation plants are 3,000 MW.) China, the world's largest user of coal, added 11.4 GW of new coal-fired electric generation plants so far this year. While the world's available coal-fired generation declined by 2.9 GW through June, those coal-fired electric generation changes were mainly due to plant retirements in Europe. Coal-fired electric generation plants provide 58 percent of China's electricity, down 10 percent since 2012. However, the new Chinese plants show the difficulty in crafting a worldwide policy to reduce CO2 emissions. --- [Mark E. Heath](#)

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### ● [It's Harder than You Think to Stop Using Fossil Fuels](#)

*"The truth is that fully transitioning to a renewable energy economy will require a tremendous, and some argue an unsustainable amount of raw materials and land."*

**Why this is important:** When considering the environmental benefits of solar and wind, many economists are evaluating their life-cycle emissions of carbon dioxide, and the cost of mining the minerals that are needed to construct solar panels and wind turbines. Life-cycle CO2 accounting takes into consideration the carbon dioxide that is generated in making wind turbines and solar panels. The carbon dioxide emitted to construct nuclear, fossil fuel, and renewable energy installations allows a better comparison of the total emissions generated by each type of power producer. --- [David L. Yaussy](#)

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### ● [EPA Extends Deadline for Discarding Coal Ash in Unlined Ponds](#)

*"A new rule from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will allow power plants to discard coal ash in unlined ponds through April of next year."*

**Why this is important:** The burning of coal to produce electricity also produces coal ash. The ash, often mixed with water, is stored in impoundments at power plants. Following the breakthrough of

several ponds into streams and rivers, the Obama administration proposed new regulations to require the closure of unlined ash ponds. Litigation has continued on what steps must be taken to prevent future coal ash spills. EPA has now released revised regulations that will let unlined coal ash impoundments continued to be used into 2024 or 2028. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis on closures while working to eliminate unlined ash ponds. Environmentalists now plan to challenge the new rules in court as well. --- [Mark E. Heath](#)

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## ● [Court Ruling Clears Way for Energy Storage on the Grid. Who Benefits?](#)

*"The July decision is a big win for independent, merchant battery companies and renewable energy proponents, and a blow to entrenched legacy generators that have worked to stall independent battery stations by complaining that these are not generation facilities and cannot perform the same way as a legacy generation station on the grid."*

**Why this is important:** This win for energy storage companies is also a win for renewable energy producers. The greatest handicap for wind and solar energy is the difficulty of storing that energy to use when needed. Utility-scale electricity storage stations will bring renewable energy sources one step closer to challenging fossil fuels as a preferred energy source. --- [Joseph C. Unger](#)

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## ● [Steel and Chemical Companies are Preparing to Decarbonize, but They Want Governments to Commit](#)

*"Representatives from steel and chemical companies—two of the worst greenhouse-gas emitting industries—say they have clean alternatives under development, but they need government policies that won't undercut their efforts."*

**Why this is important:** When we consider renewables, we generally think of their increasing deployment for the electrical grid, providing electricity to consumers for lighting or powering electric cars. However, some of the biggest generators of carbon dioxide are cement, steel and chemical industries, which need large amounts of regular, high temperature inputs that are usually provided by fossil fuels. Replacing natural gas and coal in those processes will take many years of research and development, and then more years commercializing the new, low-carbon processes. --- [David L. Yaussy](#)

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## ● [Powder River Basin Second Quarter Production Down 21.5% on Quarter](#)

*"It was the steepest decline in production, both quarter on quarter and year on year, since the first quarter of 2016."*

**Why this is important:** The COVID-19 pandemic and economic slowdown continue to pummel coal producers. Data from the Mine Safety and Health Administration shows that the Powder River Basin saw a production decline of 21.5 percent in the second quarter, April to June 2020, from 2019 production numbers. Total production for the region was 49.2 million tons in the 2020 second quarter and these reductions have resulted in the layoff or furlough of 500 employees. The Basin is likely to produce only 223 million tons in 2020. For comparison, in 2003, the Powder River Basin produced 100 million tons a quarter - 400 million tons a year. These changes continue to effect Basin producers with bankruptcies, sales and even a joint-venture taking place across the Powder River Basin. --- [Mark E. Heath](#)

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## ● [Renewable Energy Growth Continues at a Blistering Pace](#)

*"Renewables were the only category of energy that grew globally at double digits over the past decade."*

**Why this is important:** The growth of renewable energy production is promising, with a global increase of 12.2 percent in 2019. An increasing consumption rate can only drive up production over the next decade, especially when you take a closer look at who is consuming. China overtook the U.S. as the world's top consumer of renewable energy in 2018, and their growth rate over the past decade vastly exceeds all other members of the Top 10 in consumption. A competition over renewables consumption is a sure fire way to ramp up production. --- [Joseph C. Unger](#)

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## ● [WV Coal Industry has Key Role in American's Energy Future](#)

*"However, a strong future remains for coal with growth markets for coal in manufactured products, the use of metallurgical coal for steelmaking, exports of high-quality West Virginia coal and coal-based products, and the use of coal in a next generation of coal-fired power plants."*

**Why this is important:** The U.S. Secretary for Energy Dan Brouillette acknowledges that demand for U.S. and West Virginia coal is down currently, but believes there is a future for West Virginia coal in developing zero carbon emission power plants and promoting the use of coal for carbon products in the U.S. and worldwide. The new FIRST (Flexible, Innovative, Resilient, Small, and Transformative) Initiative focuses on developing carbon capture at coal-fired electric generation plants and converting coal to hydrogen for use in fuel with zero or net negative carbon emissions. A second group of DOE programs is set to develop recovery of rare earth minerals from coal sites and also are using coal for a wide range of products based on carbon fiber. West Virginia is currently home to manufacturers that use coal foam to make high strength products with incredible insulating values, including products now being used in the revamped U.S. space industry. As coal-fired electric generation continues to decline, these new uses are critical in maintaining a U.S. coal industry. --- [Mark E. Heath](#)

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## ● [Energy Question of the Week](#)

### Last Week's Question and Results

Which do you believe is the most reliable source of electric generation?

Natural Gas - 23.7%  
Coal - 21.1%  
Nuclear - 18.4%  
Hydroelectric - 13.2%  
Wind - 7.9%  
Solar - 5.3%  
Other - 5.3%  
Do Not Know - 5.3%

The U.S. should focus on building high voltage direct current electric transmission lines.

#### Strongly Agree

Select

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#### Moderately Agree

Select

---

#### Neutral

Select

---

#### Moderately Disagree

Select

---

#### Strongly Disagree

Select

Do Not Know

Select

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## ● 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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**What are your areas of interest? If there are particular industries or issues that you would like to hear about, [email us](#)! We have a large number of attorneys willing to weigh in on the issues that impact you and your business.**

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