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## Natural gas to remain main energy source, according to researchers

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Arkansas, Eric Potter, natural gas, oil, shale oil reserve, Svetlana Ikonnikova, United States.

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Published on January 23, 2014 at 11:25 pm  
Last update on January 24, 2014 at 11:50 am  
BY ADAM HAMZE

Geology researchers at the University discovered that an Arkansas shale oil reserve will continue to be one of the country's most prevalent sources of natural gas through 2050.

The Fayetteville Shale contains nearly 38 trillion cubic feet of gas, according to the study. Shale oil is extracted from fine grained sediment rock. The reserve produces approximately 1 trillion cubic feet per year. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the U.S. uses 23 trillion cubic feet of this resource each year.

“When you get into the scale of the amount of energy it takes to keep the country going, it is mind boggling,” said Eric Potter, an associate director in the Bureau of Economic Geology’s energy division. “On a cold day in Denver, it takes up to 1 billion cubic feet of natural gas to keep everyone warm.”

Potter and research associate Svetlana Ikonnikova both analyze the drilling private sector and helped determine the different technological approaches. Potter said the point of the study was to see the potential in the current techniques, and what the future holds for shale oil in Fayetteville, Ark., and across the country.

Natural gas supplies nearly one-fourth of all the energy in the U.S., and its consumption will increase 11 percent by 2030, according to the American Gas Association.



“Shale oil is very important,” Ikonnikova said. “Electricity is continuing to rely on natural gas, and how cheap it is really influences the industrial sector.”

According to the American Gas Association, natural gas is the cleanest and most efficient fossil fuel. Potter said it burns much cleaner than coal, and therefore is a better choice for the environment and atmosphere.

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Sarah Seraj, civil engineering senior and president of Engineers for a Sustainable World, said natural gas doesn't necessarily have a bad reputation among her organization.

"Natural gas is not the worst option, but there is much room for improvement," Seraj said. "The United States is studying renewable resources, which is good. Many places in Europe are 25 percent dependent on wind and solar power."

According to Ikonnikova, natural gas is aiding society in multiple ways.

"Like any resource, there will be pluses and minuses for the environment," Ikonnikova said. "But natural gas is helping the industry become more inventive."

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