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## Kern a 'microcosm of the world energy portfolio,' summit speaker says in calling for balanced approach to production

BY JAMES BURGER [jburger@bakersfield.com](mailto:jburger@bakersfield.com) Nov 8, 2017



From left: Inland District Deputy Bill Bartling, BHE Renewables Solar General Manager Don Grafton and Western States Petroleum Association Director of Production Operations Suzanne Noble discuss the future of energy in Kern County during a panel at the 11th Annual Kern County Energy Summit.

Mark Nessia

Scott Tinker is an advocate of what he calls the radical middle — a path to the world's energy future that seeks a cleaner future by balancing the use of fossil fuels with the drive for renewable energy.

And Kern County can show the way, he said.

Tinker, the director of the Bureau of Economic Geology at The University of Texas at Austin and co-

producer of the energy documentary "Switch," was the keynote speaker at the Kern County Energy Summit Wednesday morning.

He kept the crowd chuckling with his wry humor even as he delivered a metric ton of graphic data about the history of energy generation in the nation and the world.

But Tinker is serious about the idea that energy production science and policy need to track a long-term, balanced progression toward more environmentally friendly practices without throwing economic reality out with the fossil fuels.

He has little patience for those who believe the world can produce all of its energy through renewable methods by 2030.

The world simply cannot build electric cars that fast, Tinker argued, backing it up with detailed data.

Asia, Tinker said, still produces half its energy by burning coal and there are three billion people in developing countries that will look to coal's cheap, reliable energy to pull them out of poverty and into the modern technological world.

Energy is what keeps humans from living naked in a dirt cave, he said.

Consumers demand it and the market will provide it in the most economical way possible, he argued.

"Energy and poverty are related," Tinker said. "Energy doesn't end poverty but it's hard to end poverty without energy."

But the environmental impacts of generating energy – on the land, sea and air – must be dealt with as well, he said.

And that is happening – just not at the pace some environmentalists and progressive policy makers demand.

Fracking, the cracking of oil and gas rich sediments deep within the earth, can be done safely, he said. And, he emphasized, it *must* be done safely.

But fracking is not the energy boogiemán it is portrayed to be, he said. It has dramatically changed the United States' energy future and increased its independence from foreign energy sources.

And it helps clean the environment by swapping out energy produced with natural gas for energy produced with coal.

Renewable energy will grow and reduce the world's dependence on coal and other fossil fuels over time, Tinker said.

But the nation's energy policy needs to be built in a balanced way that throws out the extreme rhetoric of both the right and the left.

And that's where Kern County comes in, Tinker told the crowd.

Kern County has massive solar and wind development as well as the traditional oil and gas resources that have been a major economic driver in the county for the last century.

"You are a microcosm of the world energy portfolio," Tinker said.

Kern County needs to show the world how it's done.

Tinker's address capped a long morning of discussions about the present and future of the oil, gas and renewable energy industries in Kern County. It was sponsored by the Kern Economic Development Corp. and its partners.

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