

Industry meets academia in keynote address at annual Energy & Environment Symposium in Garfield County

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Scott Tinker gives the keynote address Wednesday before attendees at the 2023 Garfield County and CMU Unconventional Energy Center Energy & Environment Symposium in New Castle.

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It will continue to take a variety of energy options to achieve global energy, economic and climate security.

As for renewable energy? There's no such thing, said Scott Tinker, the keynote speaker at the 2023 Garfield County and Colorado Mesa University Unconventional Energy Center Energy & Environment Symposium.

Those were the two main points of Tinker's presentation Wednesday. Tinker has studied energy issues as an industry and government official, as well as from the academic side, as director of the Texas Bureau of Economic Geology, a professor at the University of Texas, and as chairman of Switch Energy Alliance and CEO of Tinker Energy Associates, LLC.

"Energy is vital for everything in the world for human flourishing, but all forms of energy have pros and cons. Nothing is perfect," said in his address, "Energy Transition and the Dual Challenge of Balancing Global Energy Access with Environmental Protection."

His was one of two featured addresses during the two-day series of panel discussions that touched on state and federal regulatory



issues, carbon capture technology, local government permitting, geopolitical concerns, a Southern Ute tribal perspective, and environmental justice efforts.

The event took place at the New Hope Church conference center in New Castle.

Tinker said all energy options should remain on the table, from fossil fuels — with an emphasis on natural gas — to wind, solar, hydroelectric and nuclear power.

Political pressure to move toward a third of the world's energy coming from renewable sources by 2064 is unrealistic given geopolitical realities and limitations in focusing too heavily on certain sources over others, he said.

“Most people don't even know how gasoline is made or where electricity comes from, but they think they do ... and they vote,” Tinker said.

When it comes to wind and solar, even though the source itself is renewable, the production of those energy sources is still rather resource consumption intensive, he said, noting the precious metals that need to be mined to produce solar panels and wind turbines.

“We can teach our kids, ‘this is the pretty energy and this is the ugly energy,’” Tinker said. “But no form of energy is renewable.

“When you have to mine and make the collectors or turbines and then dump them, because they wear out, and then do it again, that's not renewable.”

That's not to say those sources should be discarded, any more than oil and gas, he said.

It's about “optionality,” Tinker said. “Reducing options doesn't work.”

A combination of energy sources can achieve both economic and energy security around the world, as well as further the goals of climate security, he offered.

Members of Colorado's Environmental Justice Task Force — Uni Blake, senior policy advisor for the American Petroleum Institute; Tyson Johnston, vice president of land and regulatory policy for Gunnison Energy LLC; and Trisha Oeth, director of environmental Health and Protection for the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment — spoke about efforts to make energy production in Colorado more equitable.

The term “environmental justice” tends to garner negative reactions from industry, Blake said.

What it really relates to is equity, and making sure people in under-represented communities, whether that has to do with race, income, rural versus urban, have a voice in making sure their concerns around issues such as the impacts from energy production are heard.

Johnston said he relates to the “radical middle” that Tinker spoke to in his address.

“I am an advocate for natural gas,” he said. “But there is a right way to approach these subjects. There are injustices, and we can ignore them or work together to address them.”

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