

Study: Barnett gas field to produce through 2030

By 2050, gas extraction at Barnett Shale likely to wind down, UT researchers say.

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The Barnett Shale sprawls for 5,000 square miles in North Texas.

By [Asher Price](#)

American-Statesman Staff

The Barnett Shale, the 5,000-square-mile, millennia-old North Texas natural gas field, will produce gas through at least 2030, according to predictions by University of Texas researchers.

“That’s not that far away,” according to Scott Tinker, director of UT’s Bureau of Economic Geology, who helped lead research on gas production in the field.

Natural gas extraction has boomed in recent years, thanks to the marriage of innovative drilling techniques and hydraulic fracturing, which involves the injection of water, sand and chemicals to release natural gas from shale formations deep underground.

The study forecasts a cumulative 44 trillion cubic feet of recoverable gas from the Barnett Shale, with annual production steadily declining from the current peak of 2 trillion cubic feet per year to about 900 billion cubic feet per year by 2030.

By comparison, Americans consumed 24.4 trillion cubic feet of natural gas in 2011, largely to heat their homes, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. The Barnett Shale supplied nearly 10 percent of that gas.

Tinker added that the research shows that gas extraction continues apace even with low natural gas prices. “Some people have said that with the gas price down, the Barnett is dead,” said Tinker. “Not so much.”

But by 2050, Tinker said in an interview, extraction from the Barnett Shale is likely to have wound down.

“One implication is that gas will be here for decades,” Tinker said, noting that the Barnett Shale is only one of the major gas plays in the country. “This energy is secure, it’s available, it’s affordable, and it’s more environmentally friendly than some, like oil, ... even if it’s less than others.”

The UT study, paid for by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, examined production data from more than 16,000 individual wells on the Barnett Shale.

The report “adds significant rigor to the forecasts,” Svetlana Ikonnikova, energy economist at UT and one of the chief investigators of the project, said in a statement.

In its announcement, UT disclosed that Tinker is a paid adviser who sits on the advisory boards of three oil and gas companies — BP, Geo Fossil Fuels and P&P.

UT professor Charles Groat retired in November following revelations that he hadn’t disclosed in a report about the environmental consequences of natural gas drilling that he earned hundreds of thousands of dollars in income as a board member of a natural gas company that uses the so-called fracking technique.