

Energy from the Earth: Practical Geoscience to Inform Energy Legislation

Energy from the Earth: Practical Geoscience to Inform Energy Legislation was the first in a series of briefings meant to highlight how geoscience information contributes to effective energy and environmental decision making. Held on November 21, 2013, the briefing was hosted by the Geoscience Energy Briefing Consortium. The moderator, Gene Whitney, and speakers, Scott Tinker and Brenda Pierce, provided an overview of the diverse energy options available in the United States and how they are underpinned by a deep understanding of geoscience.

Scott Tinker, Director of the Bureau of Economic Geology at the Jackson School of Geosciences and the State Geologist of Texas, introduced the role of the geosciences in the global energy mix. His presentation highlighted population growth impacts on current energy trends around the world. Tinker emphasized that energy security must drive energy policy and that efficiency and diversity are critical in long-term security.

Brenda Pierce, program coordinator for the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Energy Resources Program, delved into to greater detail on energy resources research and assessments. Pierce stressed the distinction between the terms “resource” and “reserves.” She described USGS assessments of different energy sources for the U.S.; hydrocarbon-based resources such as unconventional gas from coal and oil and gas from shale, and nonhydrocarbon-based resources such as geothermal. She also touched on the environmental impacts of such resources.

The slides from the briefing are available online at <https://sciencepolicy.agu.org/geosciencebriefingseries/>. The next briefing, Geothermal Energy Transformations: Nationwide Resources and Value Chains, will be held at the end of January and will explore the pathways and barriers to implanting geothermal energy on a large scale in the United States.

The Geoscience Energy Briefing Consortium is comprised of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, American Association of Petroleum Geologists, American Geophysical Union, American Geosciences Institute, Association of American State Geologists, Geological Society of America, National Science Foundation—Directorate for Geosciences, and U.S. Geological Survey.



Speakers Scott Tinker (above) and Brenda Pierce (below) elaborate on the importance of geoscience information in energy policy. (Photo credit: Abby Seadler)
