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EARTH: Why U.S. Energy Security is Increasing

Alexandria, VA – To what extent is the United States energy independent? In recent years, Americans have heard a lot about the need to be unconstrained from foreign energy sources, but what do the numbers really tell us about our current state of independence?

Historically, the United States has relied on a diverse energy mix. From our founding through the final years of World War II, the country was nearly 100 percent energy independent: relying on coal- and oil-fired power plants, as well as a series of massive hydroelectric dams. By the second half of the 20th century, our growing demand for electricity resulted in a nationwide electric grid fed not only by domestic coal and hydropower, but also nuclear energy and natural gas. By then, we were also importing petroleum to fuel our burgeoning transportation system. In 2005, 31 percent of the total energy consumed in the U.S. was from imports. However, due to recent advances in natural gas drilling and recovery technology, in 2011 U.S. dependence on imports for total energy consumption had decreased to 19 percent.

Is the United States poised to regain energy independence? What would the implications be for national security and international relations going forward?

Read the full article online at <http://bit.ly/11QeZNz>.

Check out all of the interesting articles in the May issue of EARTH Magazine! Learn how some metals grow on trees; travel to Moab, Utah; and dig up rare earth elements in Jamaican red mud all in this month's issue of EARTH.

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