

9:00 am ET

May 6, 2015

[Energy](#)

Let's Embrace Natural Gas as a Transition Fuel



TODD MYERS: The Obama administration's energy policy goal has been to leap from a high-carbon economy to a low-carbon economy. To that end, it adopted rules that virtually rule out new coal energy generation and discourage natural-gas production, such as the president's opposition to the Keystone pipeline.

The problem with this approach is the inability to recognize that transitioning to a low-carbon economy requires that we embrace natural gas as a transition fuel. Between 2005 and 2014, energy generated by natural gas increased by twice the amount of non-hydro renewables. By way of contrast, solar energy represents only 0.4% of all electrical generation in the U.S., compared with natural gas which accounts for 27%.

Thinking that solar will replace coal and natural gas electricity any time in the near future is to ignore reality.

Embracing natural gas has also reduced carbon emissions. Since 2000, per capita CO₂ emissions declined by nearly 19%, even though GDP is about 25% larger today than in 2000. This reduction is due in large part to the boom in natural gas and energy efficiency.

Discouraging natural-gas production, however, has high costs. Renewables are significantly more expensive than natural gas. Those who argue the cost of solar is now "comparable" to natural gas are notably silent when asked if that means we can eliminate enormous taxpayer subsidies.

Restricting natural-gas production also has a global cost. Europe's dependence on Russian natural gas is having an obvious cost for Ukraine and global stability. As prices have fallen, the ability of Russia, Iran and Venezuela to



Natural gas is flared off at a plant outside of the town of Cuero, Texas. SPENCER PLATT/GETTY IMAGES

create conflict has fallen as well. North American energy independence and increased supply is a critical tool in international relations.

Natural-gas production has come largely despite the Obama administration's efforts. Those efforts have wasted time and energy fighting economic and global energy realities.

Todd Myers (@WAPolicyGreen) is environmental director at the Washington Policy Center in Seattle and author of "Eco-Fads: How the Rise of Trendy Environmentalism is Harming the Environment." He also serves on the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Council.