

# THE BAKKEN IS GASSING UP FOR AMERICA'S NATURAL SHIFT

By Jason Spiess for the Tribune



PAUL FLESSLAND/Tribune

The Hess natural gas plant outside Tioga is seen in this aerial photo.

**O**ne of the more exciting stories being extracted from the Bakken is natural gas. Although volumetrically it doesn't compare to the Bakken's crude, the natural gas plays are creating a culture of innovation that will completely transform how people live their daily lives. Many energy experts and professionals believe this "natural" shift is happening across the planet and will continue over the next decade as infrastructure is built. And the Bakken will offer a front row seat in the creation of an economic energy nucleus that will be connected to a bigger system, yet somewhat sustainable within its own energy cycle.

"The shales plays have been a paradigm shift in our industry, we always knew there was gas in the shale, but we couldn't economically get that gas out now with the technologies of horizontal drilling and the continued ability to use fracking, which isn't new as we've been fracking for 25 years," Ron Jibson, past

chairman of American Gas Association said. "With those technologies we are able to get the gas out of the shales very economically. As a result of that you have an abundance of natural gas that we've never had before."

Jibson's claim towards an abundance is undeniable as the U.S. recently became

“ This shows the global reach of North Dakota. The things we are doing here don't just have national ramifications, they have international ramifications in a very meaningful way.

the world-leader in natural gas production, by reaching a new all-time high of 328 billion cubic feet per day (BCPD), according to the BP 2014 statistical world energy review.

Furthermore, U.S. natural gas production has grown over 20 percent the past five years and the world's usage of natural gas is about 24 percent of all primary energy consumed. Oil is approximately 33 percent and coal's is 30 percent.

Natural gas trends are off the chart considering the U.S. has surpassed once

global leaders Russia, Qatar and Iran in production gains. The capturing of natural gas, as a by-product to the massive shale expansion, seems likely to continue its prodigious growth in the

Bakken and across the planet.

Qatar's natural gas production is something Ken DeCubellis, CEO, BlackRidge Oil, is familiar with, giving him an edge at understanding the current state of natural gas.

"I used to work for Exxon Mobil. And in the early 2000s into 2006, Exxon was worried, as was the rest of the country that we were running out of natural gas here. They embarked on a multi-year program investing about 30 billion dollars in the Middle East, in a country called Qatar, to get access to the natural gas in Qatar, liquefy it, ship it over to the U.S., regasify it offshore and get it into the grid," DeCubellis said. "\$30 billion. OK. Now what Exxon is trying to do is take all the natural gas that we are producing here in this country and export it. So they are going in the opposite direction. Two drivers behind why the energy situation has flipped completely on its head in a short period of time. It's the advent of horizontal