



[CONSOL'S SALE OF COAL MINES -](#)
[JUST A BUSINESS COMMODITY ISSUE](#)
[OR ALSO A SIGN OF POSITIVE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE](#)

Pittsburgh-based Consolidated Coal Company for more than 100 years, has been a major coal producer. The fact that Consol is selling many of its coal mines, heralds fundamental change in the coal industry. Is Consol's sale of coal mine simply a natural gas vs. coal commodity driven business deal, or, is there much more to be said about what this business deal is taking place, and, what it means for the environment?

Some of Pennsylvania's long-term environmental leaders, including John Slade, who ran the Department Environmental Protection's Air Emissions point source program for decades, has commented that he never expected to see, in his lifetime, such a fundamental change to cleaner fossil fuels, such as that now taking place, as a result of natural gas use from the Marcellus Shale formation. A current senior DEP official, at a recent conference, said he didn't expect to see any more permit applications, for coal fired electric generating facilities. There is also recent discussion, in the Marcellus Shale Gas industry that the ability to generate natural gas could very well go on for many generations, because the technology exists to go even deeper under the Marcellus Shale, by extending the wells currently in service deeper to extract more natural gas, if current reserves are exhausted.

Given that natural gas, and combustion is cleaner, and that coal mining and production produces substantial waste that has to be managed, and as coal based emissions which are becoming more costly to clean up, Consol's *crystal ball* is likely showing:

- Declining coal sales for electric power production.
- Reduced emissions of greenhouse gases, by 10%.
- Existing constructed and permitted coal mines lasting longer, and producing lower return on investment.
- Increased costs for coal mine residue disposal.
- Increased costs for scrubber sludges and other waste materials at coal-fired power plants.

If anything, the fact that one of the nation's largest and most successful coal companies is moving assets to cleaner fuels shows that:

- The free enterprise system works.

- Major technical innovations such as fracking, can move the United States into a leadership position (Teddy Roosevelt would have called it American *Exceptionalism*)
- If current trends continue, the United States can move into a worldwide environmental leadership position, reducing greenhouse gases, reducing shipment of goods across oceans, consuming fuel, & instead, producing goods, right here at home.

Consol is not the only coal company looking to invest in and produce cleaner fuels. RT has been retained by another Southwest Pennsylvania coal producer who is moving forward with Marcellus Shale production, with RT's Role assist with gathering line routing and assistance with permits for transmission lines to get natural gas to market.

Since the start of the industrial revolution around the world, entrepreneurship, and, since 1970 careful attention to environment has helped our country show the rest of the world that it does not have to be "jobs vs. environment", anti-environmental argument touted frequently by leaders of businesses that may be in decline.

We think that Consol's decision to sell some of its coal mines shows that the company's leaders are very smart wanting to be in the market place to provide the right fuels at the right time, with the side benefit of being a "diamond" example of large scale positive environmental change made possible by energy extraction technology advancement.

We at RT congratulate Consol on being a *forward thinking* and exceptional organization.

- Gary Brown



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