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# An Informed Voter is a Powerful Voter

**A**fter 39 years in the Autauga County school system, I decided to retire this summer and move on to another chapter in my life. But education will always be a part of me.

As I watch the Presidential election like so many Americans, I realize this election will have critical implications for the country's energy policies. The utility industry is facing challenges on how to meet the energy needs of the next generation while dealing with considerable uncertainty over the future of local, state and federal regulation, the environmental agenda and technology research. The winner of this election will determine the country's political landscape concerning these issues and our energy policy for years to come.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, demand for electricity nationally will increase by 40 percent during the next two decades and demand for electricity in cooperative service territories is growing at twice the rate of demand as other sectors of the industry. It's imperative that we are not only aware of all the factors that impact how we will generate the power needed for tomorrow, but also how much we may have to pay.

It's important to understand the discussions about our energy supply needs – from the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) role, renewables, nuclear, natural gas, to proposed legislation, there is much to learn. Many of these topics have already been featured in past issues of *Alabama Living*. Some questions we should consider asking ourselves: How does this impact me? Am I willing to pay more? Do the benefits outweigh the costs?

It is helpful to take the time to research the facts and form our own viewpoints from those resources that we trust.

The expression "an informed voter is a powerful voter" is a very true statement, so before you go to the polls on Nov. 6, educate yourself so that you can make the best choice that day – keep track of the issues; take advantage of the material we provide monthly in *Alabama Living* magazine; learn about ACRE (a grassroots movement that represents the interests of the nation's electric cooperative members) on CAEC's website ([www.caec.coop](http://www.caec.coop)) and more importantly, don't forget to vote.

Our commitment to you will be to encourage lawmakers and regulators to seek out practical, long-term remedies to our nation's energy problems based on new technology-solutions that will allow us to continue providing safe, reliable and affordable power in an environmentally responsible fashion. ■



*Chase Riddle, Chairman Board of Trustees*

# CAEC Member Appreciation and Annual Meeting

## Friday August 10

Register by mail or in person and receive  
a \$5 credit on your September bill and chances at door prizes  
including a \$500 grand door prize\*

Special gift for those attending

4:00 p.m.	Registration/Activities Begin	6:30 p.m.	Business Session
5:00 p.m.	Performance by <b>The Men of Music</b>	<input type="radio"/>	Statement of quorum
6:00 p.m.	Performance by <b>Tallassee High School Choir</b>	<input type="radio"/>	Audit, officer and management reports
6:30 p.m.	National Anthem <b>Tallassee High School Choir</b>	<input type="radio"/>	Certification of Trustee Election
		<input type="radio"/>	Unfinished Business
		<input type="radio"/>	New Business
		<input type="radio"/>	Adjournment

*\*You do not have to be present to win door prizes, including the grand prize. Whether attending in person or not at all, mail in the ballot in the center of this magazine. Your ballot registers you for Annual Meeting, qualifying you for a \$5 credit on your September bill. It also enters you into the prize drawings.*

Door Prizes

● Health Screenings  
and Expo

● Food

● Children's  
Activities

## Official Notice of Annual Meeting of the Members of Central Alabama Electric Cooperative

### Annual Meeting

It will be held at the cooperative headquarters, 1802 U.S. Hwy. 31 North, Prattville on Friday, Aug. 10, 2012, at 4 p.m. with the business session beginning at 6:30 p.m. for the following purposes:

- ◆ Presenting reports of trustees, management and auditors.
- ◆ Installing trustees.
- ◆ Acting upon such other business as may properly come before the meeting.

**Ruby J. Neeley**, secretary/treasurer

### Election of Trustees

At a meeting of the board of trustees on March 27, 2012, a committee was appointed to nominate candidates for trustees of the cooperative for the coming year (Article IV, Section 4.05 CAEC Bylaws). The following members were nominated by the committee and accepted the nomination as candidates for trustees:

**District 3:** Patsy Holmes of Wetumpka  
**District 7:** Van Smith of Billingsley  
**District 8:** Chase Riddle of Prattville

# America's Shale Gas Resources

**N**atural gas is widely recognized as one of the most versatile and valuable of our North American energy resources because it can be used in so many important ways — it's a clean generating source for almost a quarter of the nation's electric power; it serves as a clean transportation means for our highways and is a benefit in our homes and businesses for efficient heating to name a few.

We have known for many years that natural gas is trapped in hard dense deposits of shale formed from ancient

sea basins millions of years ago, but we did not have all of the technologies needed to access these resources economically until recently. Shale gas production rose nearly fivefold in the U.S. between 2006 and 2010, when it accounted for more than 23 percent of

the nation's natural gas (see graph). By 2035, nearly half is expected to come from shale gas operations.

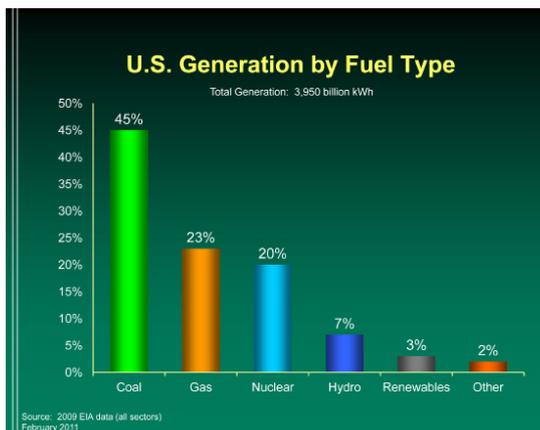
There are shale formations across large parts of the country with production or exploration in more than 30 states. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), the U.S. has more than 2,552 trillion cubic feet (Tcf) of technically recoverable natural gas — enough to fuel the U.S. for approximately 100 years.

This significant trend in U.S. natural

gas production is due in great part to technological advances such as hydraulic fracturing, or shale fracking, coupled with horizontal drilling. The process, known as “fracking,” involves the injection of more than a million gallons of water, sand and chemicals at high pressure down and across into horizontally drilled wells as far as 10,000 feet below the surface. The pressurized moisture causes the rock layer to crack. These fissures (cracks) are held open by the sand particles so that natural gas from the shale can flow up the well.

But like every energy source, shale gas has its challenges and is subject to scrutiny like nuclear, coal, solar, wind and others. While fracking makes it possible to produce natural gas in places where conventional technologies are ineffective, there still is a need for public education when it comes to understanding the operating process. According to the EIA, advances in horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing techniques, as well as improved drill bits, steering systems, and instrumentation monitoring equipment, have contributed to higher success and recovery rates, reduced cycle times, lower costs and shorter times required to bring new gas production to market.

This fracking process is a “hot topic” for the upcoming Presidential election. The present Administration supports drilling for natural gas in shale rock and has committed to take every possible action to safely develop this energy. The opposition also backs legislative efforts on fracking and promises to open



up the path for more drilling as well as stop the government from getting involved in fracking technology.

A comprehensive set of state, local and federal laws address nearly every aspect of exploration and production, including well design, water use, waste management and disposal, air emissions, surface impacts, health, safety, location, spacing and operation. In addition, each well contains multiple layers of steel casing and cementing to effectively protect groundwater.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is also looking into the process of fracking and its possible effects on the public. Last April, the “first-ever national standards to control air pollution from gas wells that are drilled using a method called hydraulic fracturing, or fracking” were implemented by the EPA. In the next two years drillers will be required to employ new technology to reduce emissions from the process, a step that will add some amount of cost to the fracking method.

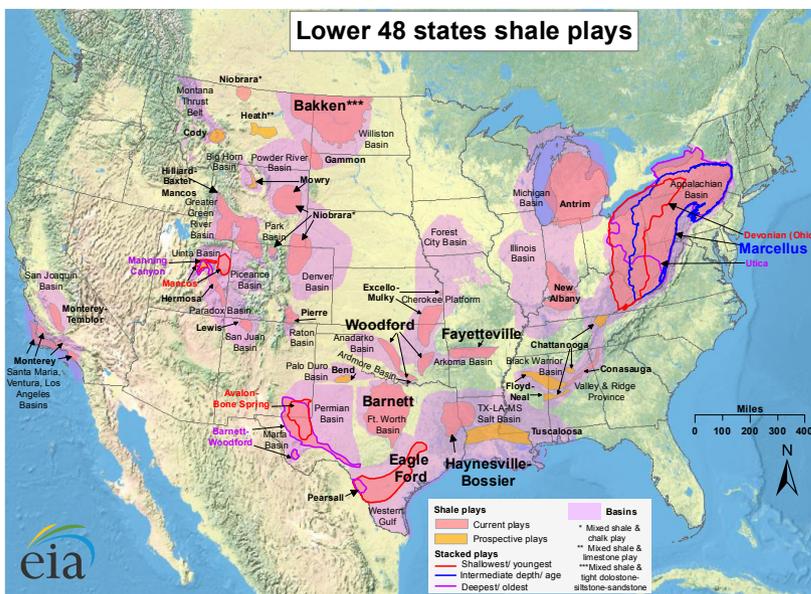
One of the biggest growth areas for natural gas will come from the increasing demand for electric power to keep pace with expected growth. According to the EIA, 250 giga watts (GW) of new generating capacity will be needed between now and 2035 to meet growing energy demand. And because natural gas plants have the potential to be cleaner, more efficient and cheaper to build than other energy sources, the agency expects natural gas to account for 46 percent of these capacity additions.

The increase in use of natural gas also has an impact on the production of electricity by coal-fired plants. With natural gas prices lower than the cost of coal, some coal power plants around the country are considering natural gas as a possible substitute to supply base load power.

And of the natural gas consumed in the U.S. in 2009, 87 percent was produced domestically; therefore the supply of natural gas is not as dependent on foreign producers as is the supply of crude oil.

The present Administration is expected to maintain energy policies promoting clean energy to reduce U.S. oil dependence on imports and propose that 80 percent of electricity production come from clean energy sources – such as nuclear, renewable, “clean coal” and “efficient” natural gas by 2035.

Having abundant, clean-burning, domestic, reliable supplies of natural gas promises more affordable energy and stable prices for consumers — making natural gas an increasingly attractive option for power generation, transportation, industrial and residential uses. ■



Source: Energy Information Administration based on data from various published studies. Updated: May 9, 2011

\*Plays are geographic areas where companies are actively looking for natural gas and shale oil reserves in shale rock.

Some of the major shale plays include: **Marcellus** (Pennsylvania, New York, Ohio, West Virginia, Kentucky); **Bakken** (North Dakota, Wyoming); **Haynesville** (Texas, Louisiana); **Barnett** (Texas); **Eagleford** (Texas); **Fayetteville** (Arkansas); **Antrim** (Michigan, Illinois, Ohio) and **Woodford** (Oklahoma)

# 2012 Trustee Nominees

*Below are this year's candidates for trustee election. Remember, every member has the opportunity to vote for each trustee. Your ballot/registration form is included in the center of this magazine.*

## DISTRICT 3: PATSY HOLMES



**P**atsy M. Holmes of Wetumpka has served on CAEC's Board of Trustees since July 1992. Holmes earned her Credentialed Cooperative Director and Board Leadership certificates from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). Each NRECA certificate requires the completion of 10 course hours of training in subjects that range from trustee responsibilities and strategic planning to understanding rates.

She has been a member of the cooperative since 1965 and currently serves as Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors for Alabama Rural Electric Associations of Cooperatives (AREA is a statewide association). Holmes serves on the board of the Elmore County Department of Human Resources, she is a member of the Wetumpka Chamber of Commerce, and she works with Hospice.

Ms. Holmes and her late husband, William "Bobo", have two sons and two grandchildren. She is also a member of the Wetumpka Church of Christ.

## DISTRICT 7: VAN SMITH

**V**an Smith of Billingsley has served on CAEC's Board of Trustees since May 1994. He has earned his Credentialed Cooperative Director and Board Leadership certificates from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). Each NRECA certificate requires the completion of 10 course hours of training in subjects that range from trustee responsibilities and strategic planning to understanding rates.

Smith began his professional career teaching vocational education for 13 years and became the assistant principal of Billingsley High School, a position he held for eight years. In 1998, Smith became the principal of Billingsley High School and continues to serve in that capacity.

Smith has been a cooperative member since 1980. He was widowed in 2008 when his wife, Ann, passed away. Their three children are grown and he has two grandchildren. Prior to his role as a CAEC trustee, Smith and his wife were involved with the Alabama Council of Cooperative's Annual Co-op Couples Conference, serving as attendees one year and as the host couple the following year.

Smith is a past president of the Autauga County Cattlemen's Association and he serves as Chairman of Deacons at Billingsley Baptist Church.



## DISTRICT 8: CHASE RIDDLE



**C**hase Riddle, who currently serves as CAEC's Board Chairman, resides in Prattville and has served on the cooperative's board since May 1994. He has earned his Credentialed Cooperative Director and Board Leadership certificates from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). Each NRECA certificate requires the completion of 10 course hours of training in subjects that range from trustee responsibilities and strategic planning to understanding rates.

Riddle and his family have been members of the co-op since 1977. Earlier in the summer Riddle retired as the director of career/technical education for the Autauga County school system, a position he held for 29 years. He is a past board member of the Prattville Area Chamber of Commerce and past board member and Chairman of the Prattville YMCA Board of Directors.

He and his wife, Sue, have four children and three grandchildren. They are members of the First United Methodist Church of Prattville.

### Derek: The Energy Sleuth

# Insulating and Sealing Your Attic Access

**E**ven in a well-insulated home, one of the most common and overlooked areas for an inadequately insulated space may be the access to the attic. Your home's attic access, which could be an attic hatch, pull-down stairs or a knee-wall door, is often uninsulated. A one-quarter inch gap around the perimeter of an entry can potentially leak the same amount of air supplied by a typical bedroom cooling and heating vent.



But before insulating the area, you should first determine the recommended insulation R-value. An R-value indicates insulation's resistance to heat flow – the higher the R-value, the greater the insulating effectiveness.

The location of your attic entrance will affect how or whether it should be

insulated. For example, if the access is in a garage where the attic is uninsulated, you can eliminate the need for insulation, but if the entrance is in your home, such as in a hallway, you may need to invest in insulation.

Attic hatches, or scuttle holes, are the most common forms of access and easily fixed for energy efficiency. The hole is simply a removable portion of the ceiling allowing entry to the attic and is most likely located in a closet or main hallway. Usually, they are constructed from thin wood or drywall, neither of which provides any substantial resistance to heat loss. For sealing, weatherstripping can be installed either on the hatch itself or on the inside of the trim or base where the hatch rests. For insulation, attach a piece of fiberglass batting (the easiest material to use for this type of opening) on top of the hatch. Add

a latch bolt to help ensure a tighter seal.

When gaining attic access through pull-down stairs, the frame encasing the stairs fits in an uneven opening and leaves a gap, much like a door or window, which must be sealed. If the gap is small (less than half an inch), caulk can be used as a sealant. If a larger opening exists, then a non-expanding foam or a backing material is suggested in combination with the caulk. Although expanding foam can be applied, be cautious because of its highly expansive nature, it could potentially distort the frame and obstruct the ability of the stairs to open and close correctly.

Furthermore, to insulate attic stairs, a moveable box can be constructed from rigid foam or fibrous duct board to fit over the stairs from the attic side. For added insulation, attach a piece of fiberglass batting on top of the box. Insulating kits are also available through weatherization suppliers or from local hardware stores.

A knee-wall door is typically a partial size door that is usually found in the upstairs level of finished-attic homes. These doors are often poorly insulated and unsealed around the frame. Make sure the knee-wall door is weatherstripped around the frame and insulate the attic side of the door. Add a latch that pulls it tightly against the frame to achieve a solid seal.

A well-insulated and sealed attic access will prevent air leakage in your home, thereby reducing energy costs and preventing discomfort. Most attic insulation and sealing systems require minimal time to install using simple tools and techniques. And as with all home projects, be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions for proper installation and safety. ■

*\*Recommended website for insulating and sealing attic access:* [www.energysavers.gov](http://www.energysavers.gov).



**Derek Blankenship** is CAEC's Energy Service Representative and Residential Energy Auditor

## Outdoor Extension Cord Safety



Darren Maddox,  
Training & Safety  
Coordinator

**A**s the climate in the state makes us all aware that summer is here, a ritual for this time of year is yard work and ambitious outdoor projects. With the aid of outdoor extension cords, many people have already been mowing, trimming and tackling outdoor tasks for several weeks. When using these cords, it is

extremely important to use them properly and safely to avoid hazards.

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, nearly 400 people are electrocuted each year using electrical appliances and about nine percent of electrocutions involve the use of lawn and garden equipment and ladders.

Extension cords are classified for either indoor or outdoor use. What's the difference between the two? The insulation, or jacket, of an outdoor-rated extension cord is made of a tougher material, which is designed to withstand temperature changes, moisture, ultraviolet rays and some chemicals. While it's fine to use an outdoor power cord indoors, never use an indoor-rated extension cord for an outside job — doing so could cause electric shock or create a fire hazard.

So whether you're doing routine yard work or a special outdoor project, following these tips can help protect you, your family and home from harm.

- Use only weather-resistant heavy gauge extension cords marked "for outdoor use." These extension cords have connectors molded onto them to prevent moisture from seeping in and the outer coatings are designed to withstand being dragged along the ground. In addition, these cords have added safeguards designed to withstand the outdoor environment.

- Examine cords before each use — damaged cords should be replaced immediately.
- Even though they're rated for outdoor use, keep all outdoor extension cords clear of standing water and protected from the elements.
- Keep your work area clean and free from debris.
- Store cords inside when not in use. If left outside for long periods, the materials that make up the cord can break down and cause dangers such as sparking, fire or possible shock.
- Do not hang cords over items such as nails, beams and pipes which can cause stress on the covering.
- To prevent overheating, do not cover cords with cloth, paper or any other material while plugged in.
- Extend the cord fully while in use — coiled cords risk the danger of overheating.

Be mindful to keep outdoor wall receptacle covers closed when not in use because moisture causes hazards when you are using an extension cord outdoors. When moisture enters an electrical circuit, it can short out the circuit and cause an electrical fire or electrocution. Using these precautionary tips for outdoor extension cords can help you stay safe while being productive. ■

