

# Conversations Conferences

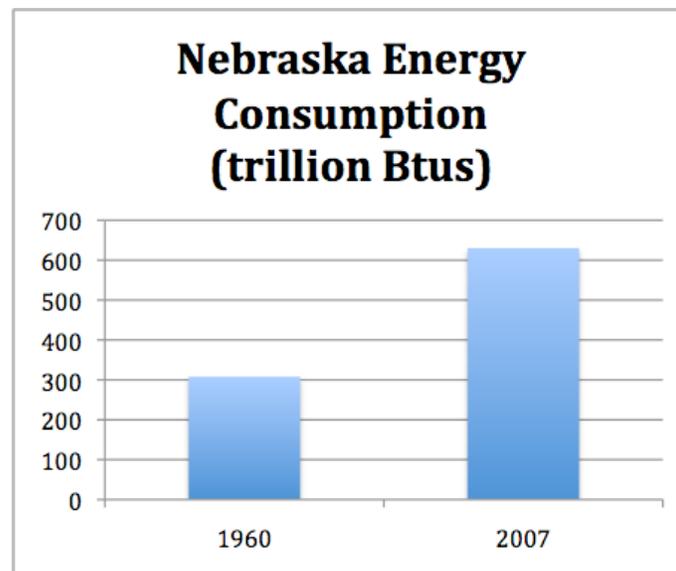


on Nebraska  
Environment  
and Sustainability

## White Paper: Energy

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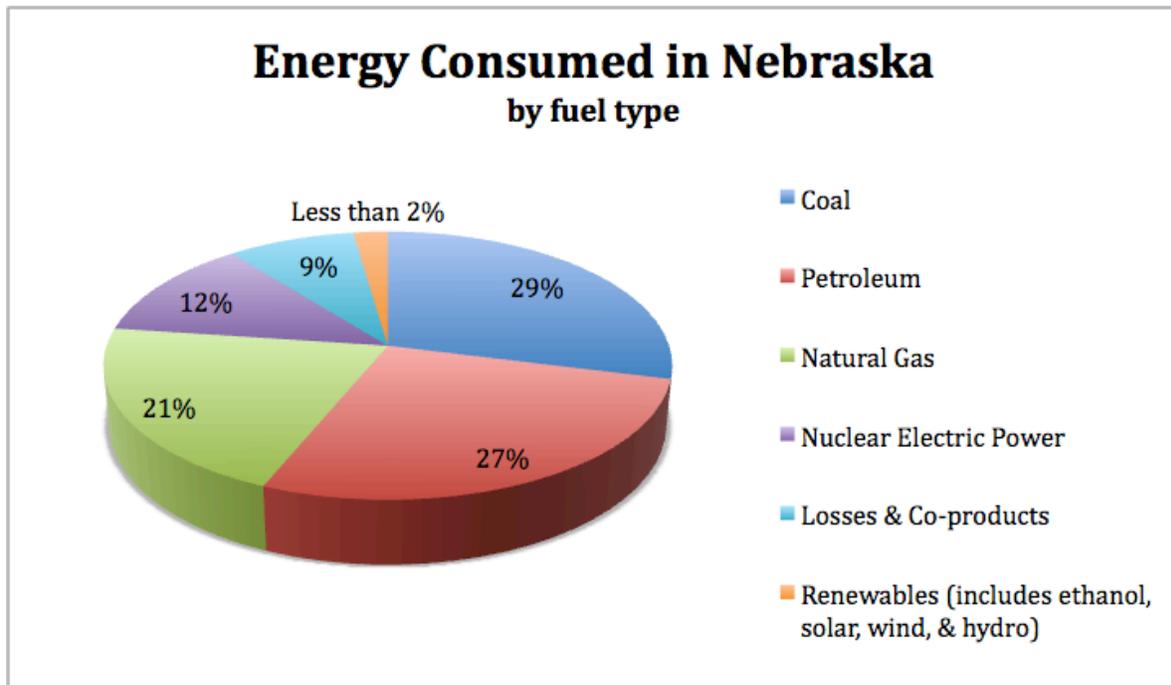
We live in interesting times. Energy is required for everything we do, from driving our cars and trucks to manufacturing things; we use energy to grow, transport, and process our food; our homes and workplaces are heated and cooled by energy; and we use increasingly more in every aspect of our day with the proliferation of electronic gizmos and gadgets.



Our demand for energy to live our Nebraska lifestyles must be met with some type of supply. So far, our demand has been met with increasing supply, but economists and scientists are calling into question how much more we can produce and keep energy prices affordable. Overall, in the past 50 years Nebraska's energy consumption has over doubled from 308 trillion Btus in 1960, to 630 trillion Btus in 2007. Right now we meet our energy needs with mixture of fuel sources.

Over 77% of Nebraskans' energy comes from fossil fuels. Fossil fuels exist in a limited quantity on earth. At some point in time, we will use up all the available and affordable fossil fuels, in which case if we want to continue a certain standard of living, we will need an alternative energy source.

Another name for fossil fuels is "ancient sunlight". Our fossil fuels are the sun's energy captured in organic matter that was then trapped in the earth for millions of years. As we use this ancient sunlight to fuel our short-term growth of the past 150 years, we are using up nature's endowment of energy-dense, easily transportable fuels. Rather than use up the endowment, we should be using current solar energy, the interest if you will, of the sun.



The closer we come to harnessing the current solar energy hitting the earth, the more sustainable our energy future will become. This includes passive solar, solar hot water, solar thermal, solar electric and wind.

As the supply of fossil fuels shrinks and with no sign that worldwide demand for energy will decrease, prices will increase. What effect will increased electricity, gasoline, and natural gas prices have on your life?

What are you going to do about it? What is your community going to do about it?

#### Questions:

With increasing demand for energy and global energy supply pushing its limits, what can we in Nebraska do to become more resilient to a future of increased energy prices and strained supply?

Are you ready for higher energy prices? Is your workplace ready for increased operating costs due to higher energy bills?

What aspect of your life would you have to change if gas reached \$6 per gallon?

What are three simple things you can do now to reduce the amount of energy you use?

<sup>1</sup> Nebraska Energy Office “2009 Annual Report”, p11; available from [http://www.neo.ne.gov/annual\\_rept/NEOAnnualReport.pdf](http://www.neo.ne.gov/annual_rept/NEOAnnualReport.pdf); Internet; accessed 10 October 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Nebraska Energy Office “Nebraska’s Total Energy Consumption by Fuel Type”; available from [www.neo.ne.gov/statshhtml/01.html](http://www.neo.ne.gov/statshhtml/01.html); internet; accessed 10 October 2010.