

ENERGY MATTERS

Soundbite summaries of the energy news you need to know

AN OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF



AMERICAN ENERGY SOCIETY

- CERAWeek in review -

A special publication for Members of American Energy Society

The premier energy event of the year set an attendance record, demonstrating that people everywhere care deeply about the sector and came to the premier conference for information, guidance, and new insights. In that regard, the event was both instructive and off-point for essentially the same reason: interest in molecules (hydrocarbons) and electrons (electricity) have converged, and decarbonization is a unifying force.

The In-Crowd

Although oil and gas are [unwavering](#) in their commitments, the divisions that defined CERAWeek in the past are blurry. Fossil didn't necessarily control the Executive side, and renewables did not dominate the Agora side. Attendees of either heard essentially the same themes:

1. Energy Transition (all aboard!)
2. Oil ain't goin' nowhere ("phaseout is a fantasy," Aramco CEO Amin Hassan Nasser)
3. Hydrogen (too big to fail?)
4. CCUS (popular but an uncertain path)
5. AI (the answer to everything)
6. Mobility/transportation (often discussed, but lacked buzz)

Wallflowers

The convergence of fossil and renewables that defined CERAWeek this year was also the reason for its disconnect. Some energy topics were barely discussed. For example, of more than 1,400 speakers there were just 3 plenary sessions about coal and 3 more about nuclear, and it is not clear if or when solar was addressed.

It's always hard to prove a negative but perhaps these topics got very little attention because they compete with natural gas. Then again, geothermal, wave, and wind power (especially OSW) are also competitors, and these topics got a lot of attention in both the Executive and Agora venues. Or, maybe the conference is trying to appeal to tech enthusiasts by pushing "cool" tech ideas like hydrogen and AI. Perhaps four dozen protestors in the park across the street from the George R. Brown Convention Center in downtown Houston who were chanting "keep it in the ground" was more than enough reason for the organizers to avoid controversy and keep conversations about coal, nuclear, and solar at a minimum.

Whatever the reason, it was odd that the most important energy event of the year paid very little attention to three sources of power that generate about 1/3rd of total electricity in the United States and almost 40% worldwide.

Deafening Silence

What else didn't get its due at CERAWeek? The downstream, especially [energy communities](#). The [45 and 48 alphabet soup](#) production and investment tax credits and [6417](#) partner direct-pay are available right now through current community benefit programs. What company wouldn't want to learn about the 20-point advantage that comes by working with disadvantaged communities? The upstream dominated CERAWeek again, while the midstream and energy communities farther downstream didn't get a lot of attention.

The Future

During exactly the same week, in Tulsa, the [Tribal Energy Equity Summit](#) hosted leaders from both tribal and federal governments and tribe-supporting organizations to discuss energy sovereignty for energy communities that are not benefiting from the energy transition. Attendees at the Tribal Energy Equity Summit are passionate. They are determined. And they want to shape an energy transition that benefits rather than ignores their interests.

It's the conference organizers' prerogative to emphasize the upstream — it's the safe marketing play and allows for very high ticket prices — but if CERAWeek wants to remain the litmus test for the sector, the conference might do well to actively recruit and include downstream energy communities. Change is coming. Future CERAWeeks will either reflect it or run the risk of ceding their authority to another event.

Overheard in the halls at CERAWeek

"Global warming has not had any discernable effect on human welfare."
- [redacted], a faculty member of (think tank) at (prestigious US university)

"We are a technology company."
- multiple executives of oil and gas companies

"Heathrow airport in London uses more energy than the entire country of Sierra Leone." - Jeff Currie, ex-Goldman Sachs superstar oil analyst famous for forecasting commodity supercycles

Exxon and Chevron while bickering over Guyana were also busy at CERAWeek trying to woo journalists, with differing levels of success. Chevron's media mixer was held in a dark, stuffy upstairs room of a music venue, served beer and wine only, and was protested by a group holding placards reading "Chevron commits genocide." Exxon's mixer was better received. Hosted in a roomy semi-outdoors bar the liquor was flowing and journalists snagged free ExxonMobil racing team beer koozies.

At the opening of CERAWeek, conference cofounder Dan Yergin said that he has grown [tired of talking](#) about the energy transition.

- Gratitude -

AES would like to recognize our sponsors — our catalysts for change.
For more information about the many benefits of sponsorship [contact AES](#).

Much thanks to our sponsors and partners:

**WILSON
SONSINI**

Honeywell

 **Women's
Energy
Network™**



**orrick**



CLEARPATH

 **FIRE2FISSION**

Schneider
Electric



BHP




nextcorps



Contact information

[The American Energy Society](#)

[AES LinkedIn Group](#)

[AES introductory video](#)

[Contact the editors](#) about the Society or this issue of *Energy Matters*.



**AMERICAN
ENERGY
SOCIETY**