



# Alabama Coalbed Methane Monthly

February 1998

## EPA decides not to pursue further court appeals on LEAF case

At the last moment, the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency decided not to try and take the matter to the Nation's highest court. Now, the EPA will apparently begin work on a regulatory program that will satisfy the ruling of the 11th Circuit Court last August.

The Legal Environmental Assistance Foundation of Tallahassee, Florida had filed a lawsuit that charged that hydraulic fracturing was not regulated under the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). The EPA lost in Federal Court on the issue and had thought that an appeal to the U. S. Supreme Court would be next.

It is unclear how the EPA plans to address the issue. The Ground Water Protection Council (GWPC), a national group representing state underground injection regulators, has taken a priority interest in this issue. It is anticipated that work will begin in March by the interested parties.

The SDWA requires underground injection activity to be regulated. While hydraulic fracturing is not specifically permitted it is definitely regulated by the State Oil & Gas Board in its permitting of a well. Other states that this could affect may not have such regulations already in place.

## Former Governor Guy Hunt dealt setback in probation

Former Governor Guy Hunt (removed from office on an ethics commission) went before a judge this month expecting his probation to be reduced or eliminated. Instead, he received a shock. Not only was the probation period continued, it was extended for five more years. On top of that, the former governor will most likely have to substantially increase the restitution payments he was ordered to make as part of his sentence.

Governor Hunt was convicted in 1993 of converting money donated to a not-for-profit inaugural fund to his personal use. He was ordered to pay more than \$200,000 in restitution and to perform 100 hours of community service.

At the current rate of payments (\$100) the restitution would not be paid off for more than 170 years. The former governor, who's community service was to find jobs for convicts, has been urged to find himself a job.

The judge's decision made it to the floor of the Alabama Senate as one Republican Senator suggested that the voters be allowed to decide if Guy Hunt is guilty.

## Election year sessions begins amid scramble for money

The last Regular Session of the term is always filled with a scramble to raise political money and spend taxpayer money. The election year budget almost always has a significant pay raise for teachers and state employees.

Under the new ethics law (passed in 1995) candidates were not able to solicit political contributions for the first few weeks of the session. That

deadline has passed as the money raising begins in anticipation of the June primaries. One statewide candidate has already raised

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### Tri-state water compact signed

The Governors of Alabama, Georgia and Florida gathered in Montgomery on February 18 to sign a historic agreement. As you may remember, the three states were on the verge of all out war in the courts over who could use the water in the river systems common to the three states.

This started when planners thought they would withdraw a tremendous amount of water from the Tallapoosa and Chattahoochee Rivers. This would have effected folks down stream in Alabama and Florida.

The pact signed would set up a process for the three states and the federal government to arrive at an allocation formula to meet everyone's needs. A lawsuit is still a possibility.

### New gasoline for Birmingham

Governor James has made his decision on a cleaner gasoline for Jefferson and Shelby counties that is designed to get the area back into compliance with ozone standards. The problem is that Governor James does not want to obligate the area to use the more expensive fuel for the next 60 months.

His proposal would give the Alabama Department of Environmental Management the task of setting up rules for a five month summer-only test this year. It remains to be seen if the EPA will sign off on this plan.

### CMAA has new home on the world wide web

The Coalbed Methane Association has a new address on the internet. This one will be a lot simpler to find.

<http://coalbed.com>

The move was made necessary due to the increasing amount of information to be offered in the future to CMAA members and visitors alike. Please make sure you bookmark this address.

If you are a member of the CMAA and you have an internet email address please send it to us. This will enable us to begin distributing more of our reports via internet email. You will get them faster and we will save postage.

### Alabama coalbed stats at a glance

**Production:**

Sep 97 Total: 9.31 BCF  
 2,770 Wells Producing Gas  
 Daily Production  
 Average Well: 112 MCF  
 All Wells: 310 MMCF  
 Cumulative Coalbed  
 Production: 815 BCF

**Spot Market Gas:**

Average Black Warrior Basin  
 Aug 97 \$2.14  
 Sep 97 \$2.48  
 Oct 97 \$3.03  
 Nov 97 \$3.23  
 Dec 97 \$2.50  
 Jan 98 \$2.25  
 Feb 98 \$1.99

### Events & Meetings

**March 3**

CMAA Board Meeting  
 1:30 p.m. / Tuscaloosa, AL  
 River Gas Offices

**March 4**

State Oil & Gas Board  
 10:00 a.m.  
 Tuscaloosa, AL

**March 6**

State Oil & Gas Board  
 10:00 a.m.  
 Tuscaloosa, AL

**April 8**

State Oil & Gas Board  
 10:00 a.m.  
 Tuscaloosa, AL

**April 10**

State Oil & Gas Board  
 10:00 a.m.  
 Tuscaloosa, AL

**April 14**

Legislative Shrimp &  
 Crawfish Boil  
 Pete Peterson Lodge  
 Montgomery, AL

**July 15, 16, 17**

CMAA Annual Meeting  
 Gulf Shores, Alabama

If you know of an event of interest to the coalbed methane industry, please send us the information. We will be happy to include it in this events list.

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