



NOC Newsletter

New Orleans Chapter
Society of Independent Professional Earth Scientists

April 2008

Volume 8, Number 4

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Art Johnson “Rethinking Biofuels”

Abstract page 2 , Bio page 4

**Andrea’s Resturant
Metairie**

Tuesday, April 15th

Chairman’s Column

Over the next seven weeks, there is much on our plates, literally. First, there is the April 15th Luncheon that conflicts with “Tax D-Day” so get the latter nuisance out of the way early in order to attend the Luncheon and hear Art Johnson’s talk on biofuels. If you are not aware, Art is the current President of the New Orleans Geological Society, and he has done an excellent job of steering NOGS along the right path this year.

Second is the need for New Orleans Chapter officer candidates for the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Secretary positions for the 2008-2009 term. These are not difficult jobs, and they do not consume too much of your valuable time. Please consider filling one of the positions soon. I would like to thank Reese Pinney for continuing in his role as Treasurer for the next term.

Thirdly, everyone should know about the SIPES 2008 Convention to be held at the Omni Royal Orleans from May 12 – 15. Please plan to go and keep in mind that the early registration deadline is April 18th. In addition, some volunteers from the New Orleans Chapter will be needed to help things run smoothly.

Last but not least is the May 20th Dinner at Andrea’s Restaurant starting at 6:00 p.m. If any member would like to donate to the “Wine-with-Dinner” Consumption Fund, please let me or someone on the Board know. We have had great success in past years with contributions from the membership towards this worthy and thirsty cause. Additionally, Tony Carollo has arranged for a local author to speak on subject matter from historical books that she has written concerning Lake Pontchartrain and Metairie. Her topics should prove to be of great interest to all the gents and ladies attending the Dinner. Make your plans to attend now. *Al Baker*

Rethinking Biofuels

The use of biofuels, especially ethanol, has been held out as a solution to America's energy needs and as a way to address carbon emissions as a factor in global climate change. Yet, there are serious problems with the current approaches to biofuels. Most of the ethanol currently produced in the U.S. is derived from corn. The process used is energy intensive so there is no real gain in addressing energy needs. In addition, corn-based ethanol production competes with food and has led to higher consumer prices. Further, most of the energy used in the current ethanol process is derived from petroleum, and the carbon dioxide emissions will likely increase further as plans move forward to increase the use of coal in ethanol facilities.

A fundamental flaw for corn-based ethanol is that it is inherently wasteful, as only the kernels of corn are used, not the plant's cellulose or lignocellulose. Production economics are only met by tax credits and sale of co-products. Current methods of producing ethanol from sugar have similar problems. Cellulosic ethanol is being developed to utilize more of the total biomass; however the processes currently being developed require expensive enzymes and have other problems, including the likelihood that the biomass for the process will require the use of genetically modified plants which are a potential environmental hazard. Underlying all of these issues is the fact that ethanol is contains only 66% of the energy content of gasoline.

Texas A&M University has developed a significantly better process that utilizes a more natural approach to biomass conversion. The "MixAlco" process utilizes a broad range of organic feedstocks, with significantly lower energy input, to produce ethanol and other industrial chemicals. Included in the output is a mixed alcohol for fuel use that has an energy content closer to that of gasoline. The implementation of this technology by Gulf States BioFuels will have a profound impact on Louisiana's industrial, agricultural, and tax base.

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The New Orleans Chapter of the Society of Independent Professional Earth Scientists meetings are held the third Tuesday of each month from September through May.

Guests are always welcome; make your luncheon reservations through **Ed Barry (504-835-2508)** no later than two days before the meeting, for a \$30 charge. We offer a complimentary lunch to prospective members. Please contact **Tony Carollo** if you are considering joining our SIPES Chapter.

Annual Advertising Rates for (2-sessions, 8-issues):
"Business card" ads are \$50
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Correspondence and remittances should be directed to:
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Arthur H. Johnson from page 1

Art Johnson is Vice President of Technology and Marketing for Gulf States BioFuels. He is a geologist and energy specialist with over 30 years of experience in the energy industry. Art was employed by Chevron for 25 years, where his positions included Division Geologist and New Trends Team Leader. He is also President and Chief of Exploration for Hydrate Energy International. Art has served on the Methane Hydrate Advisory Committee for the U.S. Secretary of Energy since 2001, chairing the committee from 2001 to 2006. He has advised Congress and the White House on energy issues since 1997. Art is currently President of the New Orleans Geological Society. He is also an Adjunct Research Professor at Tulane University, an AAPG Visiting Geoscientist, and serves on the boards of several non-profit organizations. Among his numerous recent publications are two books, "Economic Geology of Natural Gas Hydrates" published by Springer, and "Alternative Energy and Fuels Technology", published by the Catalyst Group.

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