

# SCOTT W. TINKER: STRENGTHENING CONNECTIONS

## INDUSTRY ICONS

Most Influential People in the Energy Industry: 2010-2019

*With this issue, Oil and Gas Investor begins a monthly series profiling influential individuals who will change the energy industry in the new decade and beyond.*

As director of the Bureau of Economic Geology, University of Texas at Austin, and State Geologist of Texas, Scott Tinker is a respected voice and thought-leader both within and outside the industry. His passion is to work with industry, government and academia to strengthen the connections between energy, the environment and the economy.

Tinker has an oilfield lineage. He was born in Centralia, Illinois, where his father was a Shell geologist. Like many oil folk of that era, the Tinker family migrated from one emerging play to another, from the Illinois Basin west to the Denver-Julesburg Basin, south to the Gulf Coast, north to the Anadarko Basin, and back to the D-J.

In 1970, the family landed in Houston for good. Tinker graduated summa cum laude from Cy-Fair High School and attended Trinity University in San Antonio. "I went off to do anything except geology," he says, "but I was 'saved' by Dr. Ed Roy, one of the great professors of geology."

Roy hooked Tinker on geology, and he graduated magna cum laude with a double major in business administration and geology. A job followed with Robert M. (Bob) Sneider, a world-renowned petroleum geologist. Sneider promised to "fire" Tinker after a year so that he could attend graduate school at the University of Michigan.

"He kept his promise!" Tinker laughs. "At Michigan I studied under Dr. James Lee Wilson, a world-class carbonate stratigrapher. I have been fortunate to have great mentors my whole life."

After completing a master's degree in 1985, Tinker moved to Denver to work at Champlin Petroleum. In 1988 he signed on at Marathon's research center in Littleton, Colorado, when Champlin (by then UPRC) consolidated to Fort Worth. From 1991 to 1996, while working at Marathon and beginning his fam-

ily, Tinker completed his doctorate at the University of Colorado.

He had worked with researchers at the Texas Bureau of Economic Geology (BEG) while at Marathon, and when the BEG director position opened up in 1999, with the encouragement of his close friend Charlie Kerans, he threw his name in the hat. He has directed the bureau now for a decade.

The BEG has grown from an annual budget of \$10 million to a budget of \$40 million during the years Tinker has been at the helm. It raises funds each year through grants and contracts with federal, state and private entities. The BEG's staff of nearly 200 focuses on energy and environmental research, including traditional oil and gas, unconventional gas, groundwater resources and much more.

"The BEG people are world class," he says. "It keeps me energized!"

The BEG is also heavily involved in carbon sequestration. "We have more than \$50 million in committed funding, from federal and state grants, for the next decade," says Tinker. "We're working to determine if it's possible to inject CO<sub>2</sub> into saltwater brine at scale."

The Gulf Coast lends itself to large-scale injection of the greenhouse gas, and the BEG recently received funding from the state to study the potential of the Texas-owned offshore for CO<sub>2</sub> storage. Additionally, a BEG-led demonstration in Denbury Resources' Cranfield Field, in Mississippi, has injected more than a million tons of CO<sub>2</sub>. "We are one of the leading sequestration research organizations in the nation," Tinker says.

He also serves as director of the Advanced Energy Consortium (AEC), a group of 10 major oil and service companies researching the development of micro- and nano-scale sensors for subsurface work. The AEC funds global researchers in such diverse fields as nanotechnology, physics, chemistry, biology, electronics and engineering.

"We're trying to develop a new way to illuminate the subsurface in order to extract remaining hydrocarbons," says Tinker. After three years of groundwork, doors opened in January 2008. With success, the consortium, with \$10 million per year in funding, could drive research in this space for many years.

Furthermore, Tinker hits the lecture circuit hard. In the past year he's given more than 50 keynote and invited talks worldwide, including briefings and testimony in Washington, D.C. Topics in-



clude global energy education, technology, work force, women in science, resource supply and economics.

During the course of his travels, Tinker met Harry Lynch, an award-winning documentarian interested in making a feature-length film on global energy. The \$3-million project was launched in January 2009, with Tinker serving as the on-screen voice. To date, they have filmed some of the top energy locations in the world, including geothermal in Iceland, hydroelectric in Norway, wind in Denmark, solar in Spain, nuclear in France, liquefied natural gas in Qatar, and bio-fuels in the U.S., with more to come.

"Our goal is for the broad public to see all forms of energy in their best light, and be able to understand the scale, infrastructure, challenges and intricacies of global energy," he says.

The film is scheduled for release in August 2010. The American Association of Petroleum Geologists (AAPG) Foundation supports the project, along with an array of private individuals and public companies.

Finally, Tinker serves his profession. In July 2008 he wrapped up his term as AAPG president, and currently is chairman of the AAPG advisory council. He's also heavily involved in the Association of American State Geologists, and is a past president of that organization. "That's a lot of fun, because every state has different geological and political drivers," he says.

One might wonder when Tinker sleeps. "Not very often; there is just too much to do!"

—Peggy Williams

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A HART ENERGY PUBLICATION/JANUARY 2010



Shale's up, as industry pursues its current golden child, oil.