2025 SGA Awards Finalists: ESG

Entry: Chattanooga Gas and Virginia Natural Gas Sustainable Gas Initiative

Your Company: Southern Company Gas

Linking people, ideas and information:

Stakeholder Engagement & Collaborative Partnerships: The Next Generation Natural Gas (NGG), aka certified natural gas, and renewable natural gas (RNG) initiative actively engaged a diverse group of stakeholders, including customers, legislators, regulators, community members and industry members. The initiative brought together various organizations and experts to collaborate on the sourcing and integration of NGG and RNG. Relationships with reputable NGG and RNG producers helped drive innovation and improve the initiative's overall efficiency and effectiveness. These collaborations incentivized NGG and RNG production and demonstrated how low-carbon fuels can be used to reduce lifecycle emissions across the natural gas value chain. Together, our engagement helped build trust and support for the initiative, ensuring its successful implementation and long-term sustainability.

Knowledge Sharing: Both companies prioritized transparency and knowledge sharing throughout the NGG and RNG initiatives. By providing regular updates, reports and case studies, they ensured that valuable information was accessible to all stakeholders. This dissemination of information highlighted the environmental and economic benefits of NGG and RNG and encouraged other organizations to adopt similar sustainable practices.

Educational Initiatives: The initiative included educational efforts aimed at raising awareness and understanding of NGG and RNG among employees and the organization's broader communities. Through workshops, training sessions and educational materials, CGC and VNG equipped employees with the knowledge and tools needed to support and advocate for renewable energy solutions, fostering a culture of sustainability and innovation within the organization and enhancing the organization's community brand.

Policy Advocacy: Both companies leveraged their engagement with state policymakers and industry groups to develop and promote policies that bring more transparency to the natural gas supply chain, drive technological innovation, and reduce emissions. By connecting with policymakers and industry leaders, they contribute to shaping a regulatory environment that encourages innovation and investment in sustainable fuels.

Name of Your Project / Initiative

Chattanooga Gas and Virginia Natural Gas Sustainable Gas Initiative

The Solution

The primary objectives of this program are to reduce lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions, promote the use of renewable energy sources and lead the way in adopting innovative practices within the natural gas industry. By integrating NGG and RNG into their supply, Chattanooga Gas Company (CGC) and Virginia Natural Gas (VNG) aim to enhance their environmental performance and contribute to decarbonization efforts. They also aim to expand their relationships with reputable NGG and RNG producers help drive innovation and improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the initiative. This system-wide initiative at Southern Company Gas is complementary to the business's sustainability efforts, including its long-term effort to reach net zero GHG gas emissions from its operations by 2050.

Results of Your Project / Initiative.

1. Environmental Stewardship:

The integration of NGG and RNG has led to a substantial reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. RNG, produced from organic waste materials, has a lower carbon footprint compared to conventional natural gas. By replacing a portion of the conventional natural gas supply with RNG, CGC and VNG have further decreased lifecycle GHG emissions, contributing to our company's decarbonization efforts. Both company's first RNG purchases reduced carbon emissions by approximately 10,469 MT CO_2e combined, roughly equivalent to the carbon sequestered by over 10,500 acres of U.S. forests for one year. Their NGG purchases in 2024 reduced methane emissions at production by an estimated 37,094 metric tons CO_2e.

The RNG projects have effectively diverted organic waste from landfills and wastewater treatment facilities, converting it into a valuable energy resource. This not only reduces the environmental impact of waste disposal but also supports the circular economy by repurposing waste materials.

2. Economic Benefits:

Creating a pathway to acquire RNG attributes provides RNG producers another market for their product, which encourages additionality, especially if other utilities implement similar programs.

The use of NGG and RNG can help mitigate potential future carbon pricing or regulatory costs associated with greenhouse gas emissions. RNG offers a "ready now" solution to meeting sustainability targets that is affordable relative to other decarbonization solutions.

3. Technological Advancements:

The successful integration of NGG and RNG into the existing natural gas infrastructure has demonstrated the feasibility and scalability of reduced emissions production methodologies and renewable energy solutions within the natural gas industry. The projects have showcased innovative technologies and practices that can be adopted by other utilities and energy providers.

4. Community and Stakeholder Engagement:

The NGG and RNG projects have raised awareness about the benefits of reduced emissions production and renewable energy among customers, regulators, and community members. Through educational initiatives, informational sessions, and transparent communication, CGC and VNG have built support for the initiatives and fostered a culture of sustainability.

5. Policy and Regulatory Influence:

* The engagement with key stakeholders at the state level has enabled CGC and VNG to advocate for policies and regulations that support the adoption of NGG, RNG and other sustainable energy solutions. Their efforts have contributed to shaping a regulatory environment that encourages innovation and investment in sustainable fuels. These efforts have also been enabled through the passage of Virginia's Energy Innovation Act and Sustainable Gas Program and Tennessee's Natural Gas Innovation Act. These legislative and regulatory measures support and encourage utility involvement in the production and delivery of innovative gas supply products like RNG and NGG. The Tennessee Natural Gas Innovation Act (SB 1959) allows utilities to reflect costs associated with these purchases in the utilities' purchased gas adjustment, which cannot exceed 3% of annual total cost of gas. Similarly, Virginia's Energy Innovation Act and Sustainable Gas Program (SB 565, HB 558) allows utilities to source gas with lower emissions intensity than traditional sources.

Watch the video.

Entry: Successfully Executing Our Emissions Reduction Program

Your Company: The Williams Cos., Inc.

Linking people, ideas and information:

The Emissions Reduction Program (ERP) at Williams has made significant contributions to connecting people, ideas, and information within the energy sector. By modernizing our compressor stations and implementing advanced technologies, we have fostered collaboration among engineers, environmental scientists, and industry experts. This collaborative approach has led to the development and implementation of innovative solutions that reduce emissions and improve operational efficiency. The ERP has also facilitated knowledge sharing through workshops, training sessions, and industry conferences, where we share our experiences and best practices. This exchange of ideas has not only enhanced our internal capabilities but has also contributed to the broader industry's understanding of sustainable practices. Additionally, the ERP has strengthened our relationships with regulatory bodies, communities, and stakeholders by demonstrating our commitment to environmental stewardship and transparency. Through these efforts, we have created a platform for continuous improvement and innovation, driving the industry towards a more sustainable future.

Name of Your Project / Initiative

Successfully Executing Our Emissions Reduction Program

The Solution

Williams' Emissions Reduction Program (ERP) is a multi-year investment project aimed at significantly reducing nitrogen oxides (NOX) and methane emissions from compressor stations along our Transco and Northwest Pipeline (NWP). Introduced in the 2018 Sustainability Report, the ERP involves phasing in replacements of natural gas-fired compressor units with natural gas-fired turbines and electric motor drive systems equipped with seal gas recovery systems. In 2024, we completed five Transco compressor station modernization projects, achieving substantial reductions in both methane and NOX emissions at each location. These modernization projects are crucial steps toward our goal of reducing methane emissions from ERP compressor stations by 50% by 2030, along with additional NOX reductions. The ERP is a testament to our commitment to sustainability and innovation, setting new standards in the industry.

Results of Your Project / Initiative.

The Emissions Reduction Program (ERP) at Williams has yielded impressive results, demonstrating our commitment to sustainability and operational excellence. Since its introduction in 2018, the ERP has made significant strides in reducing emissions and enhancing

the efficiency of our operations. In 2024, we completed five Transco compressor station modernization projects, resulting in substantial reductions in both methane and NOX emissions. Specifically, the new compression equipment installed has achieved NOX emissions reductions of over 95% in many cases, and the introduction of methane recapture systems has similarly reduced methane emissions by over 95% on most projects.

The ERP's success is evident in the modernization of 92 units in 2024 alone, with nine compressor stations placed into service and demolition completed at three compressor stations. These projects were executed within Williams' existing fence line and permitted via FERC's 2.55b notification process, ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements. The ERP has also led to significant operational improvements, including increased reliability and availability of our facilities. For example, data from Station 180 indicates a 4.8% increase in reliability and a 12.8% increase in availability post-ERP.

In addition to environmental benefits, the ERP has resulted in substantial operational and maintenance (O&M) savings. On average, each facility has achieved $850K in O&M savings, equating to a total forward-looking O&M savings of approximately $7.65MM. These savings are a testament to the efficiency and effectiveness of the new equipment and systems implemented through the ERP.

Looking ahead, the ERP continues to progress with several projects in various stages of completion. The Northwest Pipeline system has recently seen two projects placed into service, one in active construction, and two more scheduled to start construction in the coming years. The ERP is on track to achieve its goal of reducing methane emissions from ERP compressor stations by 50% by 2030, along with additional NOX reductions.

Overall, the Emissions Reduction Program at Williams exemplifies our dedication to sustainability, innovation, and operational excellence. Through this program, we are not only reducing our environmental impact but also setting new standards for the industry and paving the way for a more sustainable future.

Entry: Atmos Energy Converts Unused Land into Pollinator Garden that Supports Biodiversity

Your Company: Atmos Energy

Linking people, ideas and information:

Two years ago, when a 43,000 square-foot plot of land sat idle next to Gas City at the Charles K. Vaughan Center, Environmental Practices Director Stephanie Engwall collaborated with facility employees on an opportunity to Make a Difference in support of our commitment to environmental stewardship. She and her team proposed a transformative project to increase biodiversity, promote awareness of native species, and beautify the land, and thus the seeds were planted both literally and figuratively for what would soon become the Charles K. Vaughan Center Pollinator Garden.

The garden provides a natural habitat and food source for pollinators like bees, butterflies, birds, and insects that are a vital part of our local ecosystem. The garden also creates educational opportunities for employees and other visitors to learn about the importance of biodiversity.

To help encourage employee engagement, an iNaturalist project was set up so visitors can document flora and fauna they encounter in the garden. By scanning a QR code found on informational signs in the garden, employees and other visitors can record what they observe in the iNaturalist mobile app to share with fellow naturalists and discuss their findings.

Name of Your Project / Initiative

Atmos Energy Converts Unused Land into Pollinator Garden that Supports Biodiversity

The Solution

In March 2023, Engwall and her team started the pollinator garden process by collecting baseline data to determine species currently present and overall vegetative cover at the site. Much of the site was unvegetated, and the rest tended to be populated with non-native vegetation. Based on the size and location of the planting area and the plantings that were already established, the team developed a design plan.

Project planning kicked off the following month between Atmos Energy and Groundwater and Environmental Services (GES), an outside consultant we engaged to help determine the scope of work, schedule of events, and a detailed map of the proposed garden area. The team also identified native species to be planted as well as additional features like walking paths, bird boxes, a bee motel, and more.

Planting began in September 2023 with an event staffed by employee volunteers. Two signs were installed within the grassland garden identifying the flowers, trees and plants that were planted, as well as the pollinators that are attracted to each plant. The environmental team also collaborated with the facilities team on proper maintenance of the garden, and they assisted in clean-up, installing new fencing, and offering ongoing support for the habitat. Employees were encouraged to actively engage with the garden as it continued to grow over the ensuing months, and environmental staff worked alongside GES to conduct monitoring visits and observe habitat growth in the garden.

Last October, a group of 21 employee volunteers performed maintenance such as weeding and removing invasive species, planting additional native species to attract more pollinators, spreading native seed mix to outcompete any invasive species, and installing a walking path with mulch.

Results of Your Project / Initiative.

Desert Willow, Texas Kidneywood, Mimosa, Milkweed, Lantana, Turk's Cap, Blackfoot Daisy, Flame Acanthus, Frostweed, Moss Verbena, and Greg's Mistflower are among the native plants, trees, and shrubs that are located throughout the garden. These plants have welcomed many species, including honeybees, bumblebees, butterflies and moths, and the bee motel hosted numerous solitary bees and wasps over the winter.

The pollinator garden recently achieved "Silver" certification from the Wildlife Habitat Council, demonstrating that this project has been a resounding success. The plants are blooming and in good health, surviving over the changing seasons. New native plants are also sprouting, which suggests that pollinators are actually using the garden. Looking ahead, Engwall and her team are identifying new project opportunities to enhance the garden. Atmos Energy is proud to have this garden thriving at CKV as it will only continue to grow and flourish from here.