

## NCC Member Focus

**John Thompson, appointed to the National Coal Council in 2013, provides NCC with a valued environmental NGO perspective. John is an active respondent on NCC reports and always has interesting questions to pose to our meeting presenters. Thank you for your service, John!**

John Thompson was studying chemical engineering at the University of Illinois when coal changed his life. "In 1980, the campus power plant was converting from gas to high-sulfur coal," said John Thompson, now the Director of the Fossil Transition Project of the nonprofit Clean Air Task Force (CATF). "The plans didn't include sulfur dioxide scrubbers. I helped lead a group pushing for scrubbers, and after several years of studies, organizing and media attention, the state agreed. My life was on a new path."

After graduation, John worked for Proctor and Gamble. He left industry to pursue nonprofit environmental advocacy, and for the next 17 years he focused on hazardous waste, recycling and air pollution issues. Along the way, he earned an MBA from Washington University in St Louis.

In 2001, he joined the Clean Air Task Force. "We focus on North America and China," John said. "We promote new carbon capture technologies, advancing CO<sub>2</sub> pipelines and EOR using low-cost industrial CO<sub>2</sub>, and driving the adoption of CCS through incentives and regulations."

"Capturing carbon dioxide works," John said. "It works not just on coal, but gas, biomass and petroleum coke. It works on new and existing plants. Over 50% of the carbon dioxide emissions in the U.S. come from the industrial and power sectors, so CCS is essential to preventing the worst aspects of climate change."

"History shows the effectiveness of pollution controls like CCS," John continued. "For example, between 1980 and 2005, sulfur emissions fell 30% at power plants, mostly from fuel switching to low-sulfur coal. But scrubber installation surged between 2005 and 2010, cutting emissions another 30%. In only five years, scrubbers reduced sulfur emissions by an amount equal to all the fuel switching over the previous 25 years. Carbon capture will follow a similar path. Enough will be built in the coming years to gain support for the technology. That support will enable future regulations that will drive both widespread CCS adoption and deep, mid-century CO<sub>2</sub> cuts."



**JOHN THOMPSON**  
**DIRECTOR**  
**FOSSIL TRANSITION PROJECT**  
**CLEAN AIR TASK FORCE**

The Clean Air Task Force (CATF) works to help safeguard against the worst impacts of climate change by catalyzing the rapid global development and deployment of low carbon energy and other climate-protecting technologies through research and analysis, public advocacy leadership, and partnership with the private sector.

CATF is applying its technical and policy knowhow to aspects of the climate challenge in cutting-edge ways. About 10 years ago, CATF began to recognize that energy efficiency and renewables would not, on their own, be enough to slow global warming at the rate needed. Against the stark reality of continued coal use in the U.S. and EU, and growing coal use in China, India, and throughout the developing world, CATF saw that ways had also to be found to take the carbon out of coal.

Today, much of CATF's effort is devoted to commercializing and mandating technologies that use coal without emitting carbon. CATF recognized early that China, with its capacity for bringing advanced technology demonstrations to the table quickly, could be an important partner in this quest. As a result, CATF has facilitated more than a half dozen joint ventures between U.S. and China technology companies to get low or zero carbon coal deployed quickly.

For more information on CATF's efforts on climate mitigation, check out CATF's presentation at the NCC's 2016 Annual Meeting -

<http://www.nationalcoalcouncil.org/studies/2016/NCC-Spring-2016-Armond-Cohen-CATF.pdf>

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