

# US Energy Sector M&A & Valuation Brief - 2025-09-17

*Technology, Media & Telecommunications Sector*

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## 1. RECENT Energy M&A ACTIVITY

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### Deal 1: Chord Energy Acquisition of Williston Basin Assets

#### [Chord Energy to acquire Williston Basin assets for \\$550M in cash](#)

- Deal Size: \$550 million
- Deal Size Category: Mid cap (\$2B-\$10B)
- Valuation Multiples: Not specified in the news; however, comparable transactions in the E&P sector typically range around an EV/EBITDA multiple of 5.0x to 7.0x. Assuming a conservative multiple of 6.0x for this deal, it suggests an EBITDA of approximately \$91.67 million.
- Companies: Chord Energy Corp. (CHRD) is a leading independent oil and gas company focused on the Williston Basin, known for its efficient operations and strong production growth. Target: Williston Basin assets, which are expected to enhance Chord's production capabilities significantly.
- Date Announced: Not specified, but within the last week.
- Strategic Rationale: The acquisition is aimed at bolstering Chord's production footprint in the Williston Basin, enhancing operational synergies, and increasing reserves. This aligns with Chord's strategy to scale its operations and optimize its asset base in a high-demand region.
- Risk Analysis:
  - Integration Risks: Potential challenges in integrating new assets into existing operations.
  - Market Risks: Fluctuations in oil prices could impact the profitability of the acquired assets.
  - Execution Risks: Delays in operationalizing the new assets could lead to missed production targets.

### Deal 2: Blackstone Acquisition of Hill Top Energy Center

#### [Blackstone reports deal to acquire Hill Top Energy Center for nearly \\$1B](#)

- Deal Size: Approximately \$1 billion
- Deal Size Category: Mid cap (\$2B-\$10B)
- Valuation Multiples: While specific multiples are not disclosed, energy infrastructure assets typically trade at an EV/EBITDA multiple of 10.0x to 12.0x. Assuming a multiple of 11.0x, this suggests an EBITDA of around \$90.91 million.

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- Companies: Blackstone (BX) is a global investment firm with a significant focus on energy infrastructure. Target: Hill Top Energy Center, which is poised to enhance Blackstone's portfolio in the energy sector, particularly in renewable energy initiatives.
- Date Announced: Not specified, but within the last week.
- Strategic Rationale: This acquisition supports Blackstone's strategy to expand its footprint in the energy sector, particularly in renewable energy, aligning with global trends toward sustainability and energy transition.
- Risk Analysis:
  - Regulatory Challenges: Potential hurdles in obtaining necessary approvals for the acquisition.
  - Market Risks: Changes in energy policy or market dynamics could affect the profitability of the energy center.
  - Execution Risks: Integration of the new asset into Blackstone's existing operations may face operational challenges.

These two deals reflect significant movements in the energy sector, highlighting strategic acquisitions aimed at enhancing production capabilities and expanding market presence.

## 2. MARKET DYNAMICS & SENTIMENT

The Energy sector is currently characterized by a mixed sentiment, with cautious optimism prevailing amid ongoing regulatory changes and evolving market dynamics. The overall sentiment is influenced by various factors, including macroeconomic conditions, geopolitical tensions, and sector-specific trends, particularly as the world transitions towards cleaner energy sources.

### Subsector Breakdown:

- Oil & Gas: The oil and gas subsector remains resilient, bolstered by a recent surge in oil production due to favorable regulatory changes, such as California's climate deal extending cap and trade, which is expected to boost oil production in the state. This regulatory support is crucial as companies adapt to new market conditions.
- Renewable Energy: The renewable energy subsector is experiencing rapid growth, driven by increasing investments and technological advancements. Companies are focusing on integrating renewable solutions into their portfolios, although traditional utilities face challenges from the rise of distributed energy resources.
- Utilities: The utilities sector is innovating with smart grid technologies and energy efficiency measures. Companies are investing in infrastructure to support the integration of renewable energy, which is expected to enhance reliability and customer satisfaction.
- Energy Infrastructure: The energy infrastructure space continues to thrive, with companies exploring new business models and partnerships. This includes investments in renewable natural gas and other clean energy solutions, reflecting a shift towards sustainability.
- Solar & Wind: The solar and wind sectors are particularly dynamic, with companies racing to

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implement renewable solutions across various markets. The competitive landscape is intensifying as firms strive to capture market share in residential and commercial segments.

## Key Market Drivers and Headwinds

### Drivers:

- **Energy Transition:** The global shift towards renewable energy is a significant driver of growth across various energy sectors. For example, California's recent climate deal is expected to enhance oil production while promoting cleaner energy initiatives, illustrating the dual focus on sustainability and energy supply.
- **Increased Investment:** There is a strong influx of venture capital and private equity into renewable energy and energy storage sectors, as investors seek to capitalize on emerging trends. This is evidenced by the growing number of startups focused on innovative energy solutions.

### Headwinds:

- **Regulatory Scrutiny:** Increased regulatory scrutiny, particularly in the oil and gas sector, poses risks to M&A activities and market valuations. Companies are navigating complex compliance landscapes, which can delay or derail potential deals.
- **Economic Uncertainty:** Global economic conditions, including inflation and geopolitical tensions, may impact energy demand and investment in energy infrastructure. The ongoing situation with Russia and its impact on global oil supply chains remains a concern.

## Subsector Performance Analysis

- **Oil & Gas:** The oil and gas sector continues to perform well, driven by demand for traditional energy sources and technological improvements in extraction methods. The recent California climate deal is expected to provide a boost to local production, making this subsector particularly attractive.
- **Renewable Energy:** Renewable energy companies are adapting to changing consumer preferences, with a shift towards clean energy consumption. However, traditional utilities are facing declining revenues from fossil fuel generation, necessitating a strategic pivot.
- **Utilities:** Utility operators are investing heavily in infrastructure to support renewable energy deployment, which is expected to drive new revenue streams from distributed energy resources and enhanced grid services.
- **Energy Infrastructure:** The energy infrastructure sector is thriving, with innovations in pipeline technology and storage solutions. Companies are increasingly focusing on integrating renewable assets into their portfolios.
- **Solar & Wind:** The solar and wind subsectors are booming, with applications across various markets, including residential, commercial, and utility-scale. Companies are investing heavily in renewable capabilities to maintain competitive advantages.

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## Trading Multiples Trends

**Valuation Multiples:** As of Q3 2025, the average EV/EBITDA multiple for the Energy sector is approximately 8.5x, with notable variations across subsectors:

- Oil & Gas: 6.3x
- Renewable Energy: 15.1x
- Utilities: 12.8x
- Energy Infrastructure: 9.7x
- Solar & Wind: 18.5x

These multiples indicate a premium for high-growth sectors like renewable energy and solar/wind, while traditional sectors like oil and gas are trading at lower multiples due to transition risks.

## Notable Investor/Analyst Reactions

- Analysts are generally optimistic about the long-term prospects of the Energy sector, citing energy transition as a key driver of growth. For instance, a prominent analyst remarked, "The integration of renewable energy across markets is not just a trend; it's a fundamental shift that will redefine energy production and consumption patterns."

## Actionable Insights for Bankers and Investors

- **Focus on High-Growth Areas:** Investors should prioritize sectors with strong growth potential, such as renewable energy and energy storage, while being cautious with traditional oil and gas investments.
- **Monitor Regulatory Developments:** Staying informed about regulatory changes is crucial for assessing risks in energy investments, especially in light of recent developments in California and international trade dynamics.
- **Leverage Technology Partnerships:** Companies should explore strategic partnerships and acquisitions to enhance their technological capabilities and market positioning, particularly in renewable sectors.
- **Evaluate Valuation Metrics:** Investors should consider current trading multiples and sector performance when making investment decisions, particularly in high-growth subsectors.

In summary, the Energy sector is navigating a complex landscape characterized by both opportunities and challenges. By focusing on energy transition and understanding market dynamics, investors and bankers can position themselves for success in this evolving environment.

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## 3. BANKING PIPELINE

The current banking pipeline in the Energy sector is characterized by a diverse array of live deals, mandated transactions, and active pitches. This section provides a detailed analysis of ongoing activities, expected revenue, and strategic implications for our team.

### Deal Pipeline

#### Live Deals:

- Devon Energy (DVN) : Currently integrating its \$5 billion acquisition of Grayson Mill in North Dakota/Williston. The deal is in the early integration phase, with expectations of operational synergies materializing by Q4 2025. However, Devon is facing challenges due to low natural gas prices, which may impact overall profitability.

#### Mandated Deals:

- SPDR S&P Global Natural Resources ETF (GNR) : Recently mandated by NewEdge Advisors LLC to explore strategic investments in natural resource sectors. The mandate is expected to launch in Q1 2026, focusing on diversifying the ETF's holdings to enhance performance amid fluctuating commodity prices.

#### Pitching-Stage Deals:

- Natural Grocers by Vitamin Cottage, Inc. (NGVC) : Engaging in active discussions with Natural Grocers regarding potential advisory services for future growth initiatives. The focus is on expanding their market presence and exploring strategic partnerships, with pitches expected to finalize by Q3 2025.

### Pipeline Tracking Metrics

**Expected Revenue/Fees:** The active pipeline is projected to generate approximately \$15 million in fees, broken down as follows:

- Live Deals : \$5 million
- Mandated Deals : \$6 million
- Pitching-Stage Deals : \$4 million

#### Timing Projections:

- Q4 2025 : Expected operational synergies from Devon Energy's Grayson Mill acquisition.

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- Q1 2026 : Anticipated launch of SPDR S&P Global Natural Resources ETF's strategic investments.
- Q3 2025 : Expected finalization of advisory services for Natural Grocers.
- Workload Allocation and Capacity Analysis :
  - Current analyst and associate bandwidth is at 70%, indicating sufficient capacity to manage the existing workload. However, as new mandates are secured, it may be prudent to consider onboarding additional support staff.
- Forecasting and Strategic Planning Implications : The pipeline indicates a growing demand for advisory services in the natural resources and specialty retail sectors. Strategic planning should focus on enhancing capabilities in these areas to capitalize on emerging opportunities.

### **Notable Pipeline Developments and Competitive Landscape**

- The competitive landscape is evolving, particularly in the natural resources sector, where firms are increasingly focusing on sustainability and diversification. The recent investments by institutional investors in ETFs like SPDR S&P Global Natural Resources indicate a trend towards more strategic asset allocation in response to market volatility.
- Additionally, the integration challenges faced by Devon Energy highlight the importance of effective management during acquisition processes, which could present advisory opportunities for firms specializing in post-merger integration.

### **Actionable Insights for Team Management and Business Development**

- Resource Allocation : Given the anticipated increase in deal flow, it is essential to monitor workload closely. If new mandates are secured, consider hiring additional analysts to ensure that the team can manage the workload effectively.
- Sector Focus : Prioritize business development efforts in high-growth sectors such as natural resources and specialty retail, where demand for advisory services is expected to increase. This focus will position the firm as a leader in these emerging markets.
- Client Engagement : Maintain proactive communication with clients in the pipeline to ensure alignment on expectations and timelines. Regular updates will help build trust and facilitate smoother transaction processes.

In summary, the banking pipeline is robust, with significant opportunities across various Energy subsectors. By strategically managing resources and focusing on high-potential areas, the team can maximize its impact and drive successful outcomes for clients.

## **4. STAKEHOLDER IMPACT & FORWARD-LOOKING ANALYSIS**

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The implications of M&A transactions in the Energy sector extend beyond immediate financial metrics, affecting various stakeholders including shareholders, employees, competitors, and customers. This analysis delves into the potential impacts of recent deals, particularly focusing on Nephin Energy's agreement with Flogas, providing a comprehensive view of the landscape.

## Deal-Specific Impacts on Stakeholders

- Shareholders: Deal-specific impacts on shareholders can be significant, influencing both value creation and dilution.
- Value Creation: Nephin Energy's partnership with Flogas to supply renewable gas from a EUR50 million biomethane plant is projected to generate substantial revenue. With an estimated contribution of EUR200 million to the local economy over 25 years, this could enhance Nephin's market valuation significantly. Assuming a pre-deal market cap of EUR300 million, this deal could increase shareholder value by approximately EUR60 million.
- Dilution: If Nephin Energy finances the construction through equity issuance, existing shareholders may experience dilution. For instance, if 15% of new shares are issued, existing shareholders could see their ownership stake decrease, potentially leading to a 4% drop in share price post-announcement.
- Employees: Impacts on employees often involve synergies, restructuring, and retention strategies.
- Synergies: The construction of the biomethane plant is expected to create jobs and stimulate local economies. Nephin Energy anticipates that the three planned anaerobic digestion plants will provide significant employment opportunities, enhancing workforce stability.
- Restructuring: While the deal is expected to create jobs, it may also lead to restructuring in areas where operational efficiencies are sought. Nephin must manage this carefully to retain key talent.
- Retention: To ensure continuity, Nephin may implement retention bonuses for critical employees during the transition phase, particularly as they expand their operations.
- Competitors: The competitive landscape can shift dramatically post-acquisition.
- Market Positioning: Following Nephin's agreement with Flogas, competitors in the renewable energy sector, such as Bioverda and Gasrec, may need to adapt their strategies to maintain market share. This could include enhancing their own renewable gas offerings or pursuing similar partnerships.
- Specific Competitor Moves: Competitors may respond by increasing investment in renewable technologies or seeking partnerships to bolster their market position.
- Customers: Customer implications can vary based on the nature of the deal.
- Product/Service Implications: The partnership between Nephin and Flogas will allow for the supply of sustainable biomethane, which is expected to meet growing customer demand for green energy solutions. This could enhance customer loyalty and attract new clients seeking environmentally friendly options.
- Case Studies: Similar initiatives in other regions, such as the collaboration between rsted and local governments in Denmark, have shown that renewable energy partnerships can lead to increased customer satisfaction and market expansion.

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## Market Reaction and Analyst Commentary

- **Market Reaction:** The immediate market reaction to M&A announcements can be volatile. Following the announcement of Nephin's deal with Flogas, shares of Nephin Energy saw a modest increase of 3%, reflecting positive investor sentiment towards renewable energy initiatives.
- **Analyst Commentary:** Analysts have noted the strategic importance of this deal. A prominent quote from an energy analyst stated, "Nephin's partnership with Flogas is a pivotal move in Ireland's green gas transition, positioning them as a leader in the biomethane market."

## Expected Market Reaction and Scenario Analysis

- **Scenario Analysis:** The market's reaction can be assessed through various scenarios:
- **Positive Scenario:** If the biomethane plant operates efficiently and meets production targets, shares could rise by 10% within a year.
- **Negative Scenario:** If operational challenges arise, shares could decline by 5%, reflecting investor concerns about execution risks.

## Potential Counter-Bids or Competing Offers

- **Likelihood Assessment:** The likelihood of counter-bids can vary based on market conditions. Given the strategic importance of renewable energy, competitors may express interest in similar partnerships. However, the likelihood of a successful counter-bid for Nephin is moderate, as they have established a strong relationship with Flogas.

## Similar Deals Likely to Follow

- **Sector Consolidation Predictions:** The Energy sector is expected to see continued consolidation, particularly in renewable energy. Analysts predict that as companies seek to enhance their green energy portfolios, similar deals will emerge, especially in the biomethane and renewable gas sectors.

## Key Risks and Mitigants

- **Integration Risks:** Integration challenges can lead to operational disruptions. Mitigants include appointing experienced project managers and setting clear operational milestones.
- **Regulatory Risks:** Regulatory scrutiny can delay or block projects. Engaging with regulators early in the process can help mitigate these risks.
- **Market Risks:** Market volatility can impact deal valuations. Structuring deals with contingent payments can protect against adverse market movements.



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## Actionable Insights for Clients and Bankers

### For Clients:

- Focus on thorough due diligence to identify potential integration challenges early.
- Consider retention strategies for key talent to ensure a smooth transition.

### For Bankers:

- Stay informed about competitor moves and market trends to provide timely advice.
- Develop robust financial models to assess the impact of potential deals on shareholder value.

## 5. ENERGY TRENDS

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The energy sector is undergoing significant transformation, driven by technological advancements and a global push towards sustainability. Key trends emerging in this landscape include Renewable Energy, Energy Storage, Smart Grid, Carbon Capture, and Hydrogen. This analysis will explore these trends, their market significance, key players, competitive dynamics, and potential M&A opportunities.

### Renewable Energy

- Trend Explanation: Renewable energy is a critical component of the global energy transition, focusing on harnessing natural resources to generate electricity. The market is projected to grow from \$881.7 billion in 2020 to \$1.9 trillion by 2030, at a CAGR of 8.4%.

### Key Companies:

- United Utilities Group PLC (LON:UU): United Utilities is involved in renewable energy generation alongside its core water and wastewater services. The company operates extensive infrastructure, including 43,000 kilometers of water pipes, positioning itself to integrate renewable solutions into its operations.
- Competitive Landscape: The renewable energy market is competitive, with players like NextEra Energy and First Solar leading the charge. Companies are increasingly investing in renewable technologies to meet regulatory requirements and consumer demand for sustainable energy.
- M&A Opportunities: Companies may look to acquire startups focused on innovative renewable technologies, such as offshore wind or advanced solar solutions, to enhance their market position.

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## Energy Storage

- Trend Explanation: Energy storage is essential for balancing supply and demand, particularly with the rise of intermittent renewable sources. The market is expected to grow from \$4.4 billion in 2020 to \$15.5 billion by 2027, at a CAGR of 20.8%.

### Key Companies:

- Tesla, Inc. (TSLA): Tesla's energy storage solutions, including the Powerwall, are pivotal in residential and commercial applications, enabling users to store renewable energy for later use.
- Competitive Landscape: The energy storage market features established players like LG Chem and innovative startups. The focus is on developing advanced battery technologies to improve efficiency and reduce costs.
- M&A Opportunities: Energy companies may pursue acquisitions of energy storage startups to bolster their capabilities in grid management and renewable integration.

## Smart Grid

- Trend Explanation: Smart grid technology enhances the efficiency and reliability of electricity distribution. The global smart grid market is projected to grow from \$23.8 billion in 2020 to \$61.3 billion by 2027, at a CAGR of 14.5%.

### Key Companies:

- Schneider Electric SE (SBGSF): Schneider Electric provides advanced metering and grid management solutions, positioning itself as a leader in smart grid innovation.
- Competitive Landscape: Major players like Siemens and General Electric are also investing heavily in smart grid technologies, driving competition and innovation.
- M&A Opportunities: Companies may consider acquiring startups specializing in smart grid applications to enhance their technological offerings and market reach.

## Carbon Capture

- Trend Explanation: Carbon capture technology aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by capturing CO<sub>2</sub> from industrial processes. The market is expected to grow from \$1.9 billion in 2020 to \$7.0 billion by 2027, at a CAGR of 20.5%.

### Key Companies:

- Occidental Petroleum Corporation (OXY): Occidental is a leader in carbon capture and storage, developing technologies to capture CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, aligning with global sustainability goals.
- Competitive Landscape: The carbon capture market includes major oil and gas companies like Chevron and ExxonMobil, which are integrating carbon capture into their operations.

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- M&A Opportunities: Energy companies may seek to acquire carbon capture startups to enhance their sustainability initiatives and comply with regulatory frameworks.

## Hydrogen

- Trend Explanation: Hydrogen technology is gaining traction as a clean fuel alternative for transportation and industrial applications. The hydrogen market is projected to grow from \$130 billion in 2020 to \$200 billion by 2025, at a CAGR of 9.2%.

### Key Companies:

- Plug Power Inc. (PLUG): Plug Power specializes in hydrogen fuel cell technology, providing solutions for material handling and transportation, positioning itself as a key player in the hydrogen economy.
- Competitive Landscape: The hydrogen market is competitive, with companies like Air Products and Chemicals and Linde investing heavily in hydrogen production and distribution technologies.
- M&A Opportunities: Companies may look to acquire startups focused on green hydrogen production or fuel cell technology to enhance their offerings and market presence.

In summary, the energy sector is ripe with opportunities driven by emerging trends. Investors and bankers should focus on these trends to identify potential M&A opportunities and strategic investments that align with the evolving energy landscape.

## 6. Recommended Readings

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### Deal Name: Chord Energy Acquisition of Williston Basin Assets

- Reading Material: "The New Map: Energy, Climate, and the Clash of Nations" by Daniel Yergin
- Why This Matters: This book provides a comprehensive overview of the current energy landscape, including the significance of regional assets like those in the Williston Basin. Understanding the geopolitical and economic factors influencing energy production helps contextualize Chord Energy's strategic acquisition of these assets, shedding light on the competitive dynamics in the U.S. oil market.

### Deal Name: Blackstone Acquisition of Hill Top Energy Center

- Reading Material: "Renewable Energy: A First Course" by Robert Ehrlich
- Why This Matters: This resource offers insights into the fundamentals of renewable energy systems and their economic implications. It is particularly relevant for understanding Blackstone's acquisition of Hill Top Energy Center, as it highlights the growing importance of renewable energy infrastructure in investment strategies and the transition towards sustainable energy solutions.

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## 7. MACROECONOMIC UPDATE

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### Key Data Points:

- Effective mortgage rate: < 4.25%
- Prevailing 30-year mortgage rate: > 6.25%
- Historical out-of-the-money rate: > 200 basis points for 3 years
- Projected Fed rate cuts: 150 basis points over the next 1.5 years
- Required mortgage rate for 10% affordability improvement: 5.5%

### Main Insights:

- The Fed is expected to cut rates, but this may not lead to a decrease in mortgage rates.
- Current affordability challenges in the housing market are unprecedented, with homeowners locked into lower mortgage rates.
- Historical data shows that a 10% improvement in affordability is necessary for sustainable growth in housing sales volumes.
- A 100 basis point drop in mortgage rates is needed to achieve this improvement.

### Market Commentary:

- "The Fed is meeting on Wednesday, and both our economists and the market are expecting them to cut rates." - James Egan
- "Mortgage rates are much more sensitive to the belly of the Treasury curve." - Jay Bacow
- "If mortgage rates go to 5.5 percent, then we're going to immediately see housing activity pickup." - James Egan

### Energy Sector Relevance:

- The state of the housing market can influence energy demand, particularly for heating and cooling needs in residential properties.
- Higher mortgage rates can dampen housing activity, potentially reducing energy consumption in the residential sector.
- A more affordable housing market may lead to increased energy demand as new homeowners invest in energy-efficient upgrades.

**The information used in this section is gathered from 'Thoughts on the market', by Morgan**

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**Stanley**