

marketing and other, allied services. Also wholesales and retails

GA 30309. Tel.: 404-584-4000. Internet: www.aglresources.com

AGL Resources utility business performed well despite warmer-thannormal temperatures and conservation by customers. Earnings before interest and taxes increased \$7 million versus the year-ago period, driven by a \$6 million decrease in operating expenses. This can be attributed to last year's workforce and facilities restructuring programs. Also, operation and maintenance expenses per customer throughout AGL's distribution segment decreased 9% over the first six months of 2006. However, these results were offset by a lackluster performance at SouthStar, which markets natural gas and related services to retail customers on an unregulated basis, where results were also impacted by lower customer usage and higher bad debt expense.

Virginia Natural Gas (VNG) has accepted a modified performance-based rate plan. As part of the deal, VNG will freeze its base rates for five years; construct a pipeline to connect its northern and southern systems, which is expected to cost about \$48 million to \$60 million; and will be allowed to file for a permanent weather normalization plan. Also, Chat-

tanooga Gas filed for a \$5.8 million rate increase with the Tennessee Regulatory Authority to cover rising costs of financing its operations and lower consumption of natural gas. The proposal includes a plan to better align its interest with customers, by adjusting rates annually based on actual consumption versus an assumed level. We think Chattanooga will receive some, if not all, of the rate increase, which should provide a boost to earnings.

AGL's expansion of its Jefferson Island storage facility has hit a road block. In early August, the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources terminated the company's mineral lease due to the timing of leasehold payments and a lack of mining activity on the site for six months. Even so, the company remains committed to resolving these issues and getting the project completed, which will increase working gas capacity, along with revenues. has This neutrally ranked stock

worthwhile total return potential, thanks partly to dividend growth pros-pects. The good-quality shares are safe and steady, but not overly enticing. Evan I. Blatter September 15, 2006

.37 (A) Fiscal year ends December 31st. Ended

.28

.29

.31

eptember 30th prior to 2002.

Current Liab.

Fix. Chg. Cov

of change (per sh)

Revenues "Cash Flow

Dividends

Cal-

endar

2003

2004

2005

2006

2007

Calendar

2003

2004

2005

2006

2007

Cal-

endar

2002 2003

2004

2005

2006

**Book Value** 

651.0

908.0

047.0

.98

1.00

1.14

1.41

.27

.28

.31

.37

970

ANNUAL RATES

1477.0

510%

Past

10 Yrs.

1.0% 5.0%

6.5% 1.5%

5.5%

QUARTERLY REVENUES (\$ mill.) A

Mar.31 Jun.30 Sep.30 Dec.31

166.3

262.0

387.0

405

465

Sep.30

.31

.19

.27

.29

.28

.29

.31

.37

EARNINGS PER SHARE A B

186.6

294.0

430.0

436.0

480

.33

.30

.25

.37

QUARTERLY DIVIDENDS PAID C=

Mar.31 Jun.30 Sep.30 Dec.31

Mar.31 Jun.30

1939.0

442%

625.0

993.0

882

900

Dec.31

.64

.85

.72

.28

.29

.37

5 Yrs.

7.0% 7.0%

13.5%

Past Est'd '03-'05

to '09-'11

7.5% 5.0%

6.0%

Full

983.7

1832.0

2718.0

2770

2815

Full

Year

2.08

2.28

2.48

2.65

Full

1.11

1.15

1.30

1350.0

470%

(B) Diluted earnings per share. Excl. nonrecur ring gains (losses): '95, d\$0.83; '99, \$0.39; '00,

\$0.13; '01, \$0.13; '03, d\$0.07. Next earnings report due late Oct.

(C) Dividends historically paid early March,

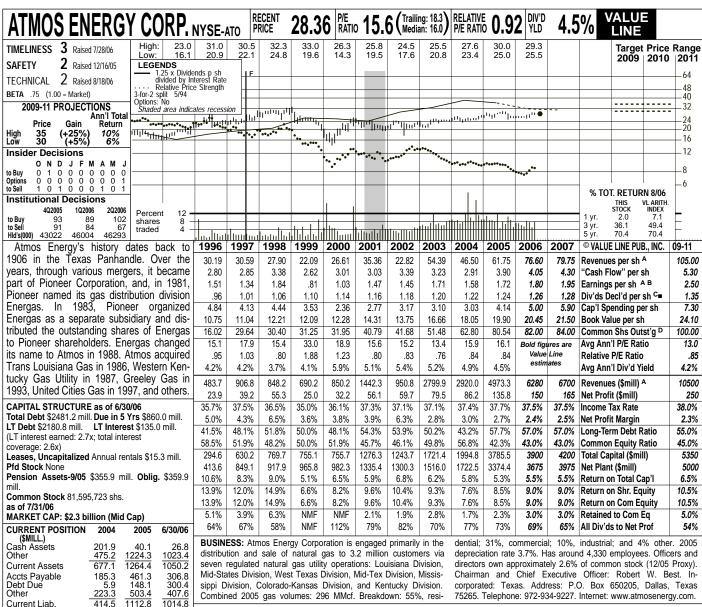
June, Sept, and Dec. ■ Div'd reinvest. plan

available.
(D) Includes intangibles. In 2005: \$422 million,

(E) In millions, adjusted for stock split.

Company's Financial Strength Stock's Price Stability B++ 95 Price Growth Persistence 70 **Earnings Predictability** 75

© 2006, Value Line Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved. Factual material is obtained from sources believed to be reliable and is provided without warranties of any kind. THE PUBLISHER IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY ERRORS OR OMISSIONS HEREIN. This publication is strictly for subscriber's own, non-commercial, internal use. No part of it may be reproduced, resold, stored or transmitted in any printed, electronic or other form, or used for generating or marketing any printed or electronic publication, service or product



Fix. Chg. Cov. **ANNUAL RATES** Past Past Est'd '03-'05 10 Yrs. 6.0% 5 Yrs. 16.5% to '09-'11 11.5% of change (per sh) Revenues Cash Flow" 2.0% 6.5% 2.0% 3.5% 4.0% 8.0% Earnings 7.0% Dividends 3.0% 8.5% 5.0% Book Value 6.5%

384%

395%

400%

Fiscal Year		TERLY REV			Full Fiscal
Ends	Dec.31	Mar.31	Jun.30	Sep.30	Year
2003	680.4	1194.1	488.5	436.9	2799.9
2004	763.6	1117.5	546.1	492.8	2920.0
2005	1371.0	1687.8	909.9	1004.6	4973.3
2006	2283.8	2033.8	863.2	1099.2	6280
2007	1675	1675	1675	1675	6700
Fiscal	EAR	NINGS PE	R SHARE	ABE	Full .
Year Ends	Dec.31	Mar.31	Jun.30	Sep.30	Fiscal Year
2003	.60	1.24		d.05	1.71
2004	.57	1.12	.09	d.11	1.58
2005	.79	1.11	.06	d.21	1.72
2006	.88	1.10	d.22	.04	1.80
2007	.85	1.15	.08	d.13	1.95
Cal-	QUAR	TERLY DI\	/IDENDS F	AID c■	Full
endar	Mar.31	Jun.30	Sep.30	Dec.31	Year
2002	.295	.295	.295	.30	1.19
2003	.30	.30	.30	.305	1.21
2004	.305	.305	.305	.31	1.23
2005	.31	.31	.31	.315	1.25
2006	.315	.315	.315		

It appears that Atmos Energy's earnings per share increased around 5%, to \$1.80, in fiscal 2006 (ends September 30th). Within the non-utility division, the marketing segment benefited greatly from strategies to capture favorable arbitrage spreads created by natural gas volatility. But the performance of the utility operation was hampered by warmer temperatures, which especially affected the Mid-Tex and Louisiana units because they did not have a weather-normalized rate structure during that time. (Combined, these units account for over 60% of the customer base.) Also, we estimate that the aftereffects of Hurricane Katrina reduced share net by about \$0.10.

We believe that the bottom line will advance about 8%, to \$1.95 a share, in fiscal 2007, assuming further expansion in operating margins. And it is important to note that weather-normalized rates will be effective for the Mid-Tex operation beginning October 1st. Moreover, a rate design calling for a partial decoupling from the impact of unfavorable temperatures will take effect for the Louisiana unit on December 1st. With these moves, some 90% of the utility's margins are protected weather-normalization adjustments (versus about 33% previously).

Atmos looks poised to register steady, if measured, bottom-line increases over the 2009-2011 period. With the utility division now serving 3.2 million customers across 12 states, the company is not dependent on the economic climate in any one region of the country. Furthermore, the non-utility segments, particularly pipelines, have decent expansion prospects. In the present corporate configuration, share net ought to grow around 8% annually over the 3- to 5-year horizon.

These good-quality shares offer a healthy dose of dividend income. Prospects for additional increases in the distribution seem reasonable, too, as supported by our favorable 2009-2011 projections for Atmos Energy.

But long-term total-return potential is not spectacular, as capital appreciation possibilities are limited at the current quotation. Also, the equity is ranked to perform only in line with the market in the year ahead.

Frederick L. Harris, III September 15, 2006

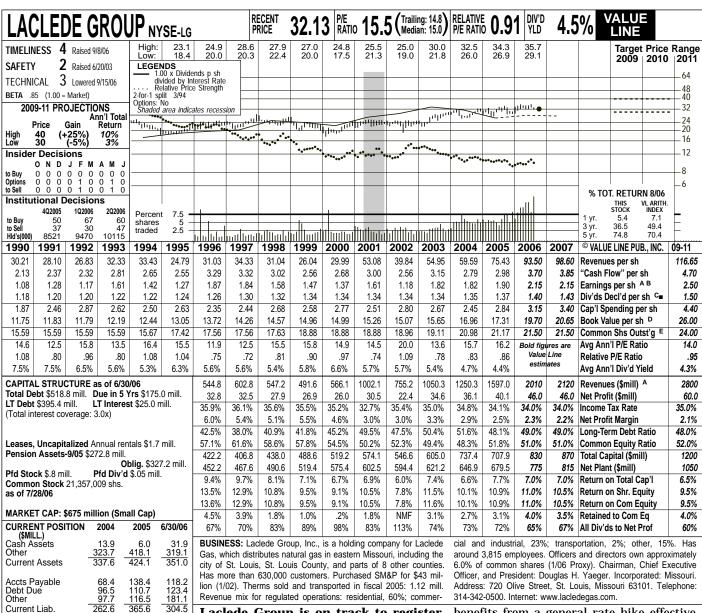
(A) Fiscal year ends Sept. 30th. (B) Diluted March, June, Sept., and Dec. ■ Div. reinvestshrs. Excl. nonrec. items: '97, d53¢; '99, d23¢; '00, 12¢; '03, d17¢. Next egs. rpt. due early Nov. (C) Dividends historically paid in early (E) Qtrs may not add due to change in shrs

ment plan. Direct stock purchase plan avail. (D) In millions, adjusted for stock splits.

outstanding. **(F)** ATO completed United Cities merger 7/97.

Company's Financial Strength Stock's Price Stability Price Growth Persistence 100 **Earnings Predictability** 

© 2006, Value Line Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved. Factual material is obtained from sources believed to be reliable and is provided without warranties of any kind. THE PUBLISHER IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY ERRORS OR OMISSIONS HEREIN. This publication is strictly for subscriber's own, non-commercial, internal use. No part of it may be reproduced, resold, stored or transmitted in any printed, electronic or other form, or used for generating or marketing any printed or electronic publication, service or product



benefits from a general rate hike effective since last October, and income from

Laclede Group is on track to register healthy results in fiscal 2006 (ends September 30th). Laclede Energy Resources, the non-utility gas marketing seg-ment, is still benefiting from supply/demand imbalances resulting from last year's Gulf Coast hurricanes, plus a surge in volumes (reflecting higher interstate pipeline wholesale transactions). Furthermore, SM&P Utility Resources, the unregulated unit specializing in locating and märking services for underground facilities, is being aided by new business signups in existing markets. And we note that this subsidiary recently bought Reliant Services, which provides similar services. Given that both businesses have customers in the same geographic areas, synergies ought to generate decent cost savings going forward.

But the core natural gas unit has un-derperformed of late. This can be attributed partly to higher operation and maintenance expenses, as well as an increased provision for uncollectible accounts. A decline in volumes within the service territory has further eroded earnings. On the bright side, there have been

entities located outside the system has been rising. On a consolidated basis, share net ought to grow about 13%, to \$2.15, in

fiscal 2006. Laclede's bottom line may flatten out next year because of the difficult comparison.

We believe that unexciting results are in store for the company over the  $\textbf{2009-2011} \quad \textbf{timeframe.} \quad \text{The} \quad \text{market} \quad \text{in}$ which the natural gas division operates has sluggish customer growth because it is in a mature stage. Moreover, it appears that major acquisitions are not likely to take place anytime soon. Consequently, annual share-net gains may only be in the mid-single-digit range, with some volatility, over the 3- to 5-year horizon.

The stock's good yield aside, total-return potential is not appealing. That is because these shares are already trading within our 2009-2011 Target Price Range, and we are assuming that future dividend increases will be moderate. Also, the Timeliness rank is 4 (Below Average). Frederick L. Harris, III September 15, 2006

.345 .345 .34 .345 2005 1.38 345 355 .355 2006 (A) Fiscal year ends Sept. 30th.
(B) Based on average shares outstanding thru. , then diluted. Excludes nonrecurring loss:

279%

Past

10 Yrs. 7.5% 1.0% 2.5%

1.0%

3.0%

QUARTERLY REVENUES (\$ mill.)A

186.6

245.1

311.3

330.5

.19

.29

.13

.25 QUARTERLY DIVIDENDS PAID C =

Jun.30 Sep.30 Dec.31

.335

.335

440

Dec.31 Mar.31 Jun.30

422.2

475.0

576.5

708.8

EARNINGS PER SHARE

Dec.31 Mar.31 Jun.30

1.14

1.12

1.06

1.05

1.05

.335

.335

34

655

Fix. Chg. Cov.

of change (per sh)

Revenues "Cash Flow"

Dividends Book Value

280.1

332.6

442.5

689.2

635

.80

.87

.79

1.23

1.15

Mar.31

.335

.335

.335

Earnings

**Fiscal** 

Year Ends

2003

2004

2005

2006

2007

Year Ends

2003

2004

2005

2006

2007

Cal-

endar

2002

2003

2004

ANNUAL RATES

293%

5 Yrs.

17.0%

1.5% 4.5%

Past Est'd '03-'05

Sep.30

161.4

197.6

266.7

281.5

Sep.30

d.21

d.28

d.24

d.26

d.30

.335

.335

390

ABF

290%

to '09-'11 10.5%

8.0% 5.0%

Full Fiscal Year

1050.3

1250.3

1597.0

2010

2120

1.82

1.82

1.90

2.15

2.15

Full

Year

1.34

1.34

1.36

(C) Dividends historically paid in early January, April, July, and October. ■ Dividend reinvest- (E) In mi ment plan available.

(E) In millions. Adjusted for stock split.
(F) Qtly. egs. may not sum due to change in (D) Incl. deferred charges. In '05: \$203.8 mill., shares outstanding.

Company's Financial Strength Stock's Price Stability B+ 95 Price Growth Persistence 55 **Earnings Predictability** 65

NEV	N JE	ERSI	EYR	ES. N	IYSE-1	IJR	R	ECENT RICE	49.5	P/E RATIO	<b>20.</b>	6 (Traili Medi	ng: 16.2 <b>)</b> an: 15.0 <b>)</b>	RELATIVE P/E RATIO		1 DIV'D	2.9		ALUI LINE	=	
TIMELIN	IESS 4	Raised 2	2/17/06	High: Low:	20.3 14.3		28.0 18.8	26.8 21.0	27.4 22.4	29.8 24.1	32.5 24.8	33.6 24.3	39.5 30.0	44.6 36.5	49.3 40.7	51.4 41.5			Target	Price	Range
SAFETY	, .	Raised 9	/15/06	LEGE	NDS		1	20			20	20	00.0	00.0					2009	2010	12011
TECHNI	CAL 2	2 Raised 8	3/25/06	1.1 div	18 x Divid vided by Ir	ends p sh iterest Rate e Strength	. —														<u> </u>
BETA .8				3-for-2 sp	elative Pric olit 3/02	e Strength															80 64
200	9-11 PR	OJECTIO	ONS	Options:	No	ates recess	ion					26.0									48
	Price	Gain A	nn'l Total Return									<del>3-101-2</del> <b>♦</b>		Uml <sup>1,111</sup>	6101,111	11111111					
Hiah	60 (	+20%)	8%							n . tl	, <u>,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,</u>	111111111111111111111111111111111111111	11111111111	-							32
LOW	50 `	(Nil)	3%	*****			. լիում	+ <sup>11</sup>  +++ - - - -	HH111111	though.	1,11										<u>+24</u> -20
inside	r Decis		A M J	11,,,	الهميث	904	****	•••••					*****								16
	0 0 0	0 0 0	0 0 0	(11,11,11,11	tales de		••••			*******		•••••		••••••	•••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••	•••••					12
Options o Sell	1 4 0	0 5 0 0 4 0																0/ TOT	DETUD	  N  0/07	
Institu		Decisio													1.	ud.		% 101	T. RETUR THIS	VL ARITH.	-8
t- D	4Q2005			Percen		ļ.,							.1	1. 11. 1	<del>      </del>	<del>       </del>		1 yr.	STOCK 9.2	INDEX 7.1	-
to Buy to Sell	64 60	71 52	73 60	shares traded	5 - 2.5 -				1					,11111111				3 yr.	51.6	49.4	Ė
Hld's(000)	13455	14778	16255														0007	5 yr.	95.0	70.4	00.44
1990	1991	1992		1994	1995	1996	1997	1998		2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007		LINE PUI		09-11
16.01	15.99		18.02	19.22	17.03	20.22	25.97	26.59	33.98	44.13	76.82	66.17	93.43	91.33	114.29	117.45	120.60	Revenue	•		129.8
1.54 .65	1.58 .55		2.14 1.15	2.31	2.13 1.29	1.37	2.45 1.48	2.60 1.55	2.79 1.66	2.99 1.79	3.18 1.95	3.21 2.09	3.58 2.38	3.75 2.55	3.92 2.65	4.00 2.80	4.20 2.90	Earnings	ow" per s		4.70 3.3
.96	1.00	1.03	1.01	1.01	1.01	1.03	1.40	1.09	1.12	1.15	1.17	1.20	1.24	1.30	1.36	1.45	1.50	Div'ds De			1.7
4.37	2.91	1.99	2.31	2.10	1.77	1.78	1.72	1.60	1.81	1.85	1.66	1.53	1.71	2.17	1.92	1.80	1.95	Cap'l Spe			2.1
8.85	8.57	9.44	9.81	9.64	9.70	10.10	10.38	10.88	11.35	12.43	13.20	13.06	15.38	16.87	15.90	17.45	18.80	Book Val	• .		23.1
20.28	20.95	24.43	25.23	25.95	26.69	27.13	26.82	26.72	26.61	26.39	26.66	27.67	27.23	27.74	27.55	28.10	28.20	Common	Shs Out	st'g D	28.5
24.0	22.3		15.1	13.0	11.7	13.6	13.5	15.3	15.2	14.7	14.2	14.7	14.0	15.3	16.8		ures are	Avg Ann			17.
1.78	1.42		.89	.85	.78	.85	.78	.80	.87	.96	.73	.80	.80	.81	.90		Line nates	Relative			1.1
6.2%	8.1%	7.5%	5.8%	6.2%	6.7%	5.6%	5.3%	4.6%	4.5%	4.4%	4.2%	3.9%	3.7%	3.3%	3.1%	CSUII	iutes	Avg Ann	'l Div'd Yi	ield	3.09
			as of 6/30			548.5	696.5	710.3	904.3	1164.5	2048.4	1830.8	2544.4	2533.6	3148.3	3300	3400		٠, ,	Α	370
	ebt \$490 : \$333.8			<b>Yrs</b> \$250. <b>st</b> \$22.0 n		38.7	41.5	43.3	44.9	47.9	52.3	56.8	65.4	71.6	74.4	80.0	82.0	Net Profi			95.
		apitalized		<b>3ι</b> ψ22.0 π		32.6%	33.3%	30.4%	36.2%	37.8%	38.0%	38.7%	39.4%	39.1%	39.1%	39.0%	39.0%	Income T			40.0%
	rest earr	ned: 5.5x;	total inte	rest cover	rage:	7.1% 50.7%	6.0% 49.3%	6.1% 51.2%	5.0% 48.7%	4.1%	2.6% 50.1%	3.1% 50.6%	2.6% 38.1%	2.8%	2.4% 42.0%	2.4% 42.0%	2.4% 41.0%	Net Profit		Patio	2.5°
1.8x) Pensio:	1 Assate	s- <b>9/05</b> \$8	2.6 mill			45.8%	47.1%	45.6%	51.2%	52.9%	49.9%	49.4%	61.9%	59.7%	58.0%	58.0%	59.0%	Common			63.09
CIISIOI	1 73301	3 3/03 <b>4</b> 0.		<b>Oblig.</b> \$99	9.9 mill.	598.2	590.6	638.2	590.4	620.1	706.2	732.4	676.8	783.8	755.3	845	890	Total Car			105
Pfd Sto	<b>ck</b> None	)		_		655.2	659.4	680.0	705.4	730.6	743.9	756.4	852.6	880.4	905.1	935	970	Net Plant	•	.,	112
Commo	n Stock	<b>c</b> 28,080,3	R14 she			8.1%	8.6%	8.1%	9.0%	9.0%	8.5%	8.7%	10.7%	10.1%	11.2%	10.5%	10.5%	Return or	. ,	ap'l	10.59
as of 8/		. 20,000,0	) i T 3113.			13.1%	13.9%	13.9%	14.8%	14.6%	14.8%	15.7%	15.6%	15.3%	17.0%	16.0%	15.5%	Return or		•	14.59
			on (Mid (	.,		13.5%	14.3%	14.4%	14.8%	14.6%	14.9%	15.7%	15.6%	15.3%	17.0%	16.0%	15.5%	Return or			14.59
	NT POS	SITION	2004	2005	6/30/06	3.4%	4.0%	4.4%	5.0%	5.4%	6.1%	6.9%	7.7%	7.8%	8.5%	8.0%	7.5%	Retained		•	7.09
<b>(\$Mil</b> Cash A			5.0	25.0	4.7	76%	73%	71%	67%	63%	59%	56%	51%	49%	50%	52%	52%	All Div'ds	s to Net P	rot	529
Other			581.0	927.8	808.7				Resource									nd related			
Jurrent	Assets	. (	686.0	952.8 813.4 for New Jersey Natural Gas Co., a natural gas utility (about 463,000 tomers in 17 states. 2005 deprec. rate: 2.8% customers at 9/30/05) in Monmouth, Ocean, and parts of other N.J. years. Has 551 utility employees, 16,300 stckh																	
Accts_P	ayable		42.9	54.7	38.0				ume: 124.									16,300 S			
Debt Di Other	ue		287.4 357.4	177.4 744.2	157.0 510.4				ectric utilit									ddress: 14			
Current	Liah			976.3	705.4	release	). New J	ersev Na	itural Ener	rav subs	id. provi	des unre	gulated	NJ 0771	9. Tel.: 7	732-938-	1000. Into	ernet: www	w.nilivina	.com.	

New Jersey Resources results over the first nine months of fiscal 2006 (year ends September 30th) have been **solid.** Earnings over this timeframe increased about 14.5%, to \$3.23 a share, with most of the gains being driven by an improved performance at the company's energy services subsidiary. In fact, the segment posted an earnings advance of about 90% this year due to growth in its portfolio of storage and transportation contracts. Since the unit covers many markets in the eastern half of the United States and Canada, it is able to capture additional value when prices fluctuate between regions. All told, the business now represents over 20% of corporate earnings. The third quarter was a weak one at the company's main subsidiary, New Jersey Natural Gas (NJNG). It posted earnings of \$1.7 million, well below the \$3.9 million in the year-earlier period. The decrease was primarily the result of conservation by customers. The utility currently has a weather normalization plan in place to protect against temperatures that are warmer than normal, though, it is unable to protect against lower usage. There-

fore, in December, NJNG proposed a plan with the New Jersey Board of Public utilities to implement a conservation usage adjustment (CUA) plan to replace the normalization policy, which would provide protection against both temperature and usage changes. Management remains optimistic that the program will be approved and be in place by next winter's heating season. However, should regulatory approval not be granted, the company is exploring alternatives that includes filing for a rate increase. Meanwhile, the utility added about 7,870 new customers through the third quarter, and will likely grow at a rate above the industry average for the next few years thanks to the strong demographics of the region NJNG serves. About a third of new customers are conversions from other fuel sources.

Though untimely, this stock offers decent total return potential. This is largely due to expanding profits from its nonutility operations. Other pluses include the likelihood of a more consistent earnings stream through the CUA proposal, and steady dividend increases. Evan I. Blatter September 15, 2006

(A) Fiscal year ends Sept. 30th.
(B) Diluted earnings. Next earnings report due (C) Dividends historically paid in early January,

357.4 687.7

826%

Past

18.5%

5.5% 7.5%

2.5% 5.0%

QUARTERLY REVENUES (\$ mill.) A

Dec.31 Mar.31 Jun.30 Sep.30

369.7

438.5

544.3

536.1

.16

.06

.07

.10

d.14

Jun.30 Sep.30 Dec.3

.30

.31

.325

.34

.36

610

EARNINGS PER SHARE AB

QUARTERLY DIVIDENDS PAID C=

668.9 1152.7

1037 7

1065.1

1064.4

1150

Dec.31 Mar.31 Jun.30

1.50

1.82

1.84

2 14

1.84

.30

.31

.325

.34

.36

643.0

854.0

1164.6

.85

.87

.91

1 23

1.13

Mar.31

.30

.31

.325

.34

.36

1085

976.3

660%

5 Yrs.

23.5%

6.0% 8.5% 3.0% 7.0%

353.1

4144

684.9

534.9

Sep.30

d.13

d.20

d.17

d.43

d.17

.31

.325

.34

555

Past Est'd '03-'05

705.4

700%

to '09-'11

4.5% 4.0%

4.5%

4.5% 6.5%

Full Fisca Year

2544.4

2533.6

3148.3

3300

3400

Full Fisca Year

2.38

2.65

2.80

2.90

Year

1.20

1.24

1.30

1.36

Current Liab

Fix. Chg. Cov.

ANNUAL RATES

of change (per sh)

Revenues "Cash Flow"

Dividends Book Value

Earnings

Fiscal

Year Ends

2003

2004

2005

2006

2007

Fiscal Year Ends

2003

2004

2005

2006

2007

Cal-

endar

2002

2003

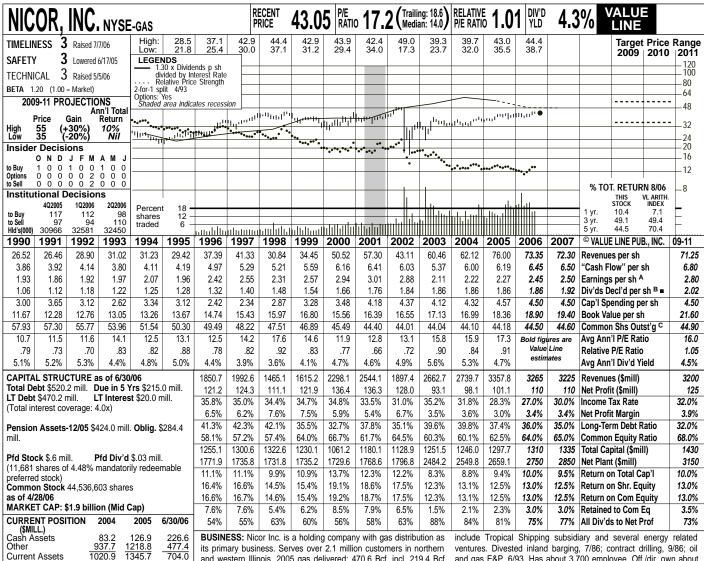
2004

2005

2006

April, July, and October. ■ Dividend reinvestment plan available. (D) In millions, adjusted for split.

Company's Financial Strength Stock's Price Stability 100 Price Growth Persistence **Earnings Predictability** 100



its primary business. Serves over 2.1 million customers in northern and western Illinois. 2005 gas delivered: 470.6 Bcf, incl. 219.4 Bcf from transportation. 2005 gas sales (251.2 bcf): residential, 80%; commercial, 18%; industrial, 3%. Principal supplying pipelines: Natural Gas Pipeline, Horizon Pipeline, and TGPC. Current operations

ventures. Divested inland barging, 7/86; contract drilling, 9/86; oil and gas E&P, 6/93. Has about 3,700 employee. Off./dir. own about 2.8% of common stock. (3/06 proxy). Chairman and CEO: Russ Strobel. Inc.: IL. Address: 1844 Ferry Road, Naperville, IL 60563. Telephone: 630-305-9500. Internet: www.nicor.com.

11.5% 0.5% 8.0% 4.0% 1.0% 2.5% 1.0% 4.0% 4.0% 1.5% 3.0% 1.5% 3.0% QUARTERLY REVENUES (\$ mill.) Full Mar.31 Jun.30 Sep.30 Dec.31 452.8 294.8 743.8 2662.7 429.5 299.9 894.6 2739. 484.4 336.0 1357.5 3357.8 1174.3 3265 451.3 320 500 350 1125 3225 EARNINGS PER SHARE A Full Mar.31 Jun.30 Sep.30 Dec.31 Year 2.11 .44 d.26 1.08 .35 d.06 1.02 2.27 .41 d.05 1.15 2.45 .40 2.50 QUARTERLY DIVIDENDS PAID B = Full Mar.31 Jun.30 Sep.30 Dec.31 1.84 .465 .465 .465 1.86 .465 .465 .465 1.86 .465 .465 .465 1.86 .465 .465

433.9 50.0

995.3

NMF

Nicor's core gas distribution segment has posted mixed results. In the first six months of the year, this unit posted a modest decline in operating profits from a year ago. Excluding the cost recovery of \$3.8 million related to a mercury repair and inspection program, operating earnings declined by 1%, to \$70.8 million, in the period. An increase in base rates, approved by the Illinois Commerce Commission last fall, helped to boost revenues, but was partially offset by unseasonably warm weather, which reduced the demand for gas deliveries. This decrease in demand lowered net profits by roughly \$7.5 million compared to management's forecast. In light of the weather-related losses, the gas distribution segment will probably weigh on the bottom line in the full year. Even so, this is considered a temporary issue, and an eventual return to normal weather conditions should benefit earnings. Too, operating and maintenance expenses have been running below management's expectations, with room for further cost reductions, barring an unforeseen spike in natural gas prices. The company's other business seg-

ments should bolster the bottom line. Nicor's Tropical Shipping unit is generating higher revenues, due to an increase in rates. But some of those gains are likely to be mitigated, in part, by incremental payroll and transportation costs. Separately, the energy ventures segment should post better results in the second half of this year, as deferred revenue, related to its utility bill management products, are recognized.

Nicor may be able to raise its dividend following a recent legal settlement. In July, the company reached a settlement with the SEC regarding the investigation over its accounting for natural gas costs between 2000 and 2002. Under the terms of the settlement, Nicor will be subject to a \$10 million fine, without admitting or denying any wrongdoing. With the legal issues in the rearview mirror, there ought to be a greater amount of cash available to shareholders. As of June 30th, there was nearly \$227 million in cash on the balance sheet.

These shares may interest incomeoriented accounts. Charles W. Noh September 15, 2006

(A) Based on primary earnings thru. '96, then diluted. Excl. nonrecurring gains/(loss): '89, 7¢; '97, 6¢; '98, 11¢; '99, 5¢; '00, (\$1,96); '01, 16¢; '03, (27¢); '04, (52¢); '05, 80¢; '06, (17¢). Excl.

Accts Payable Debt Due

Current Liab.

Fix. Chg. Cov

of change (per sh)

Revenues "Cash Flow

Dividends

Cal-

2003

2004

2005

2006

2007

Calendar

2003

2004

2005

2006

2007

Cal-

endar

2002

2003

2004

2005

2006

**Book Value** 

1171.3

1115.7

1179.9

1319.4

1250

1.11

.98

94

1.00

.46

.465

.465

ANNUAL RATES

Other

502.9

490.2

1171.4

428%

Past

10 Yrs.

658.2

636.0

1622.9

367%

5 Yrs.

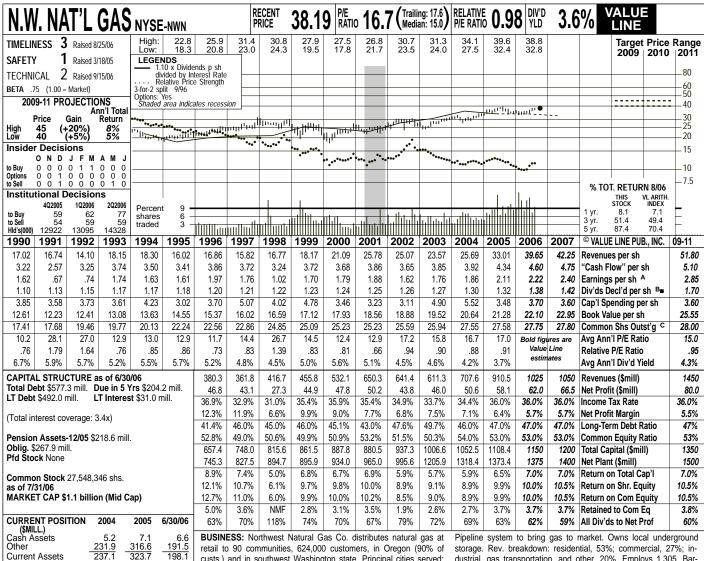
Past Est'd '03-'05

to '09-'11

items from discontinued ops.: '93, 4¢, '96, 30¢. Quarterly earnings may not sum to total due to rounding. Next earnings report due early Nov. (B) Dividends historically paid early February,

May, August, November. Dividend reinvestment plan available. (C) In millions, adjusted for

Company's Financial Strength Stock's Price Stability 55 Price Growth Persistence 35 **Earnings Predictability** 80



retail to 90 communities, 624,000 customers, in Oregon (90% of custs.) and in southwest Washington state. Principal cities served: Portland and Eugene, OR; Vancouver, WA. Service area population: 2.4 mill. (77% in OR). Company buys gas supply from Canadian and U.S. producers; has transportation rights on Northwest

storage. Rev. breakdown: residential, 53%; commercial, 27%; industrial, gas transportation, and other, 20%. Employs 1,305. Barclays owns 6.2% of shares; insiders, 1% (4/06 proxy). CEO: Mark S. Dodson, Inc.: OR. Address: 220 NW 2nd Ave., Portland. OR 97209. Tel.: 503-226-4211. Internet: www.nwnatural.com.

NMF 316% 340% Fx. Chg. Cov. ANNUAL RATES Past Past Est'd '03-'05 to '09-'11 of change (per sh) 10 Yrs. 5 Yrs. 8.0% 2.5% 5.0% 1.0% 11.0% 4.5% 7.0% 4.5% 1.5% Revenues "Cash Flow" 1.5% 1.0% Dividends **Book Value** 4.0% 3.5% 3.5%

102.5 117.5

267.3

135.3 134.7

326.6

76.8 85.3

215.1

Accts Payable Debt Due

Current Liab.

Other

Cal- endar	QUAR Mar.31		VENUES ( Sep.30		Full Year
2003	206.5	117.5	69.5	217.8	611.3
2004 2005	254.5 308.7	109.7 153.7	81.4 106.7	262.0 341.4	707.6 910.5
2006	390.4	171.0		333.6	1025
2007	375	1050			
Cal-	EA	RNINGS P	ER SHARI	A	Full
endar	Mar.31	Jun.30	Sep.30	Dec.31	Year
2003	1.01	.17	d.25	.83	1.76
2004	1.24	d.03	d.30	.95	1.86
2005	1.44	.04	d.31	.94	2.11
2006	1.48	.07	d.30	.97	2.22
2007	1.55	.05	d.30	1.10	2.40
Cal-	QUAR	TERLY DIV	IDENDS P	AID B =	Full
endar	Mar.31	Jun.30	Sep.30	Dec.31	Year
2002	.315	.315	.315	.315	1.26
2003	.315	.315	.315	.325	1.27
2004	.325	.325	.325	.325	1.30
2005	.325	.325	.325	.345	1.32
2006	.345	.345	.345		

Northwest Natural's second-quarter earnings turned out a bit better than **expected**, despite weather that was 16% warmer than average and 12% warmer than last year's. The company's share of commodity cost savings added about \$0.03 a share in the June period, and profits from interstate gas storage contributed an additional \$0.02. Operations and maintenance expenses were up 3% but would have risen 2% without increased bad debt costs, due to higher gas prices.

We anticipate roughly normal earnings growth over the balance of the year. Northwest Natural increased its customer count by 3.3% in the 12 months ended in June, and the new accounts should boost earnings through 2006 and 2007. While the national economy is definitely slowing, Portland seems to be doing better than the nation as a whole, with little decline in new home construction. (Northwest's share of new home heating fuel is over 90%.) But the company plans to lay off 50 to 100 employees in the second half of the year, and severance costs will probably add up to around \$0.04 a share in the fourth quarter.

Earnings in 2007 will likely benefit from new efficiency and cost-cutting efforts. Northwest has begun to implement a companywide plan to reduce costs by consolidating some operations, standardizing functions, and outsourcing some operations, such as new construction. The plan will take a few years to implement completely and will probably result in a workforce reduction of 200 to 250 employees, some by normal attrition.

Northwest's earnings will probably grow faster than its industry's, thank's to above-average customer growth. The area to the southeast of Portland will soon be zoned for higher density, permitting profitable installation of gas mains and significant customer growth. And the company serves less than 60% of its market at present, allowing it to pick up new customers as old oil tanks need replacing.

These neutrally ranked shares have below-average total return potential at their recent quotation. Although we like Northwest's prospects, we think investors will have an opportunity to invest at a better price.

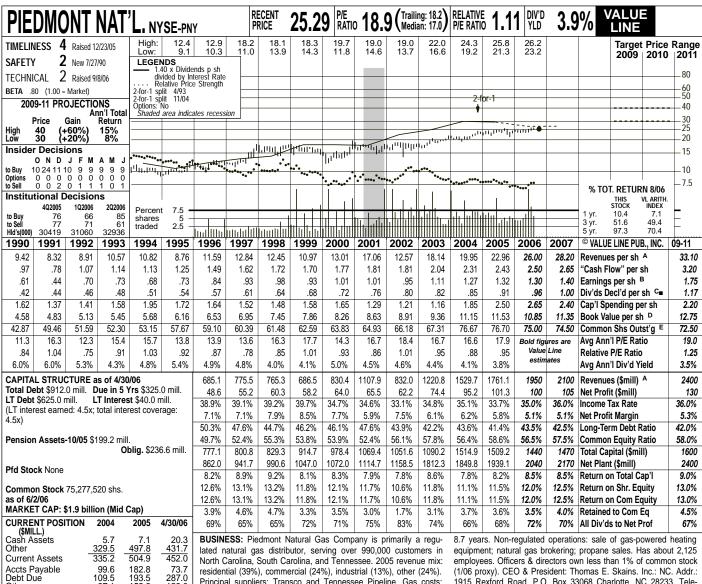
Sigourney B. Romaine September 15, 2006

(A) Diluted earnings per share. Excludes non-recurring gain: '98, \$0.15; '00, \$0.11. Next earnings report due early November. (B) Dividends historically paid in mid-February,

mid-May, mid-August, and mid-November.

■ Div'd reinvestment plan available. (C) In millions, adjusted for stock split.

Company's Financial Strength Stock's Price Stability 100 Price Growth Persistence **Earnings Predictability** 75



residential (39%), commercial (24%), industrial (13%), other (24%). Principal suppliers: Transco and Tennessee Pipeline. Gas costs: 71.6% of revenues. '05 deprec. rate: 3.3%. Estimated plant age:

Piedmont Natural Gas posted a larger

share loss than we had anticipated.

The fiscal third quarter (ended July 31st)

was impacted by reduced margins due to rate design changes, and costs associated

with the company's corporate restructur-

ing program. In July, Piedmont and North

Carolina's Attorney General office reached a settlement on its customer utilization tracker rate mechanism, which decouples

the collection of utility margin from cus-

tomer volume. This plan is favorable for both customers, who will benefit by the

more efficient use of natural gas, and Piedmont shareholders, who will not suffer the

negative consequences of conservation by

customers. As part of the agreement, the

company will fund up to \$1.5 million an-

nually over the next few years toward cus-

tomer conservation programs, in addition

to the \$500,000 it had already committed to spend. Furthermore, Piedmont's initial

retirement to management-level employees and will eventually include other posi-

tions as part of an effort to streamline business processes and improve corporate

efficiencies. The company should realize

phone: 704-364-3120. Internet: www.piedmontng.com.

Fix. Chg. Cov 378% 400% 390% ANNUAL RATES Past Est'd '03-'05 Past to '09-'11 of change (per sh) 10 Yrs. 5 Yrs. 11.0% 5.5% 5.0% 5.0% 7.5% 7.0% 8.5% 6.0% Revenues "Cash Flow" Earnings Dividends Book Value 6.5% 3.0%

306.2

528.6

483.7

Other

Current Liab.

Fiscal Year Ends	QUART Jan.31	ERLY RE\ Apr.30	/ENUES (\$ Jul.31	mill.) A Oct.31	Full Fiscal Year
2003	493.5	407.8	140.1	179.4	1220.8
2004	618.8	482.4	214.7	213.8	1529.7
2005	680.6	508.0	232.9	339.6	1761.1
2006	921.4	483.2	237.9	307.5	1950
2007	875	565	315	345	2100
Fiscal	EAR	NINGS PEI	R SHARE	ABF	_Full .
Year Ends	Jan.31	Apr.30	Jul.31	Oct.31	Fiscal Year
2003	.87	.47	d.15	d.08	1.11
2004	1.03	.54	d.11	d.21	1.27
2005	.93	.52	d.06	d.07	1.32
2006	.94	.57	d.16	d.05	1.30
2007	.98	.57	d.06	d.09	1.40
Cal-	QUAR	Full			
endar	Mar.31	Jun.30	Sep.30	Dec.31	Year
2002	.193	.20	.20	.20	.79
2003	.20	.208	.208	.208	.82
2004	.208	.215	.215	.215	.85
2005	.215	.23	.23	.23	.91
2006	.23	.24	.24		

(A) Fiscal year ends October 31st.
(B) Diluted earnings. Excl. extraordinary item: 00, 8¢. Excl. nonrecurring charge: '97, 2¢. Next earnings report due mid-Dec.

(C) Dividends historically paid mid-January, April, July, October.

restructuring involved

■ Div'd reinvest. plan available; 5% discount. **(D)** Includes deferred charges. At 10/31/05:

offering

early

\$4.0 million, 5¢/share.
(E) In millions, adjusted for stock splits.
(F) Quarters may not add to total due to change in shares outstanding.

Price Growth Persistence **Earnings Predictability** 

(1/06 proxy). CEO & President: Thomas E. Skains. Inc.: NC. Addr.: 1915 Rexford Road, P.O. Box 33068 Charlotte, NC 28233. Teleabout \$5 million to \$6 million in annual

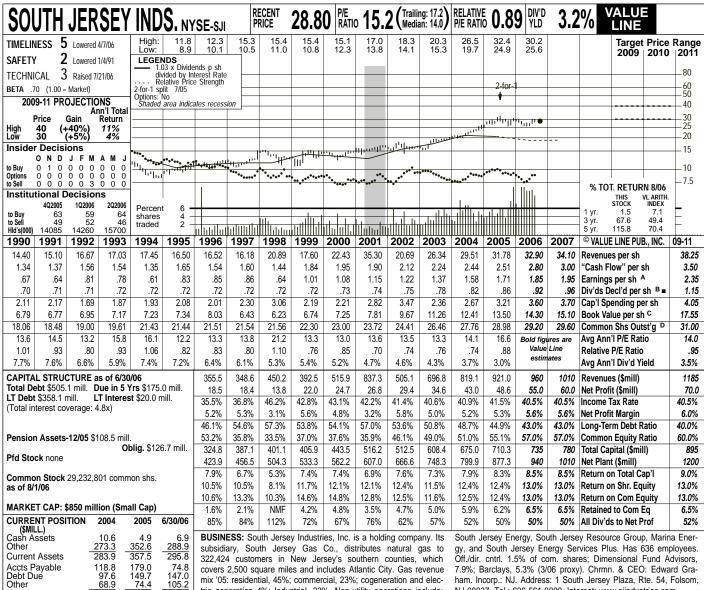
cost savings beginning in 2007.

The company's nonutility operations will likely represent a greater percentage of future profits. Over the first six months of 2006, these activities contributed earnings of \$25.5 million, which is nearly 20% above the year-ago period. Even though regulated operations make up most of Piedmont's total income, unregulated operations such as Cardinal Pipeline, Pine Needle, and SouthStar Energy provide an added boost to the company's bottom line. We expect Piedmont to continue to pursue strategic investments

to diversify its earnings stream over the next few years.

untimely, Though this stock suitable incomefor conservative **oriented investors.** Piedmont offers a respectable dividend yield at 3.9% and has an Above Average Safety rank (2). Moreover, the company should benefit as it diversifies its supply portfolio away from the Gulf Coast region through agreements with Midwestern Gas Transmission Company and Hardy Storage Company. Evan I. Blatter September 15, 2006

> Company's Financial Strength Stock's Price Stability B++ 100 80



covers 2,500 square miles and includes Atlantic City. Gas revenue mix '05: residential, 45%; commercial, 23%; cogeneration and electric generation 4%; Industrial, 23%. Non-utility operations include:

comparisons have been weak over the

South Jersey Industries'

7.9%; Barclays, 5.3% (3/06 proxy). Chrmn. & CEO: Edward Graham. Incorp.: NJ. Address: 1 South Jersey Plaza, Rte. 54, Folsom, NJ 08037. Tel.: 609-561-9000. Internet: www.sjindustries.com.

to '09-'11 first six months of 2006. This is largely of change (per sh) 10 Yrs. 5 Yrs. 5.5% 4.5% 7.5% 6.5% 4.5% 6.5% Revenues "Cash Flow due to warmer than normal temperatures 8.0% 1.5% and conservation by customers as a result Dividends of high natural gas prices. On the positive **Book Value** 5.5% 13.0% 6.0% side, there is continued optimism that the QUARTERLY REVENUES (\$ mill.) company's conservation and usage adjust-Cal-Full Mar.31 Jun.30 Sep.30 Dec.31 endar ment proposal will be approved by the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities and 2003 106.2 90.1 220.6 696.8 136.5 819.1 2004 307.6 129.5 245.5 be in place by next winter's heating sea-2005 328.6 154.0 157.0 281.4 921.0 son. Moreover, the utility added 8,740 cus-960 2006 365.0 155.5 162 277.5 tomers during the past 12 months, which 2007 375 175 172 288 represents nearly a 3% increase over the EARNINGS PER SHAREA Full prior year. Due to the strength of the local Calendar Mar.31 Jun.30 Sep.30 Dec.31 Year economy and demand for housing in the 2003 .92 1.37 region, the company should add customers d.07 at a rate exceeding the industry average over the next few years. For 2006, we look 2004 .91 .15 .50 1.58 .02 2005 .96 .27 .09 .39 1.71 2006 .93 .25 .14 .53 1.85 for earnings to advance about 8%, to \$1.85, .98 .30 .55 2007 due to a pickup in nonregulated activities,

> Marina Energy still has room for growth. It recently completed the expansion of its Atlantic City thermal plant to support the 500,000-square-foot expansion to the gaming area at the Borgata Hotel

followed by a more sustainable 6%-7%

Casino & Spa. Results should be further enhanced toward the end of next year when an 800-room tower is completed at the Borgata. Also, Marina is in the process of completing a 3.8 megawatt methane-toelectric generation project at the Warren County district landfill, which should provide additional opportunities for growth. Looking ahead, the subsidiary may be able to benefit should a casino/hotel be built on a 50-acre property owned by MGM that is located next to the Borgata.

After a slow start to the year, the Residential & Commercial Service business may exceed its 2005 performance going forward. This is primarily due to recent additions to its portfolio of services that include propane heaters and appliances, and small commercial heating, ventilating, and air conditioning systems.

This untimely stock is best suited for investors seeking moderate yield and good dividend growth potential. Over the 2009-2011 period, we look for steady dividend increases, which should push the yield to around 3.5%, along with a slight reduction in the debt-to-equity ratio. Evan I. Blatter September 15, 2006

(A) Based on avg. shs. Excl. nonrecur. gain: '01, \$0.13. Excl gain (losses) from discont. ops.: '96, \$1.14; '97, (\$0.24); '98, (\$0.26); '99 (\$0.02); '00, (\$0.04); '01, (\$0.02); '02, (\$0.04);

QUARTERLY DIVIDENDS PAID B

Mar.31 Jun.30 Sep.30 Dec.31

.188

.193

.202

.213

.225

.395

.415

.438

.188

.193

.202

.213

.225

976

285.3

426%

Past

403.1

486%

Past Est'd '03-'05

327.0

445%

Full

.78

Other

Cal-

endar

2002

2003

2004

2005

2006

.185

Current Liab.

Fix. Chg. Cov

ANNUAL RATES

'03, (\$0.09); '05, (\$0.02). Excl. gains due to acct'g change: '93, \$0.04; '01, \$0.14. Next egs. report due late Oct.

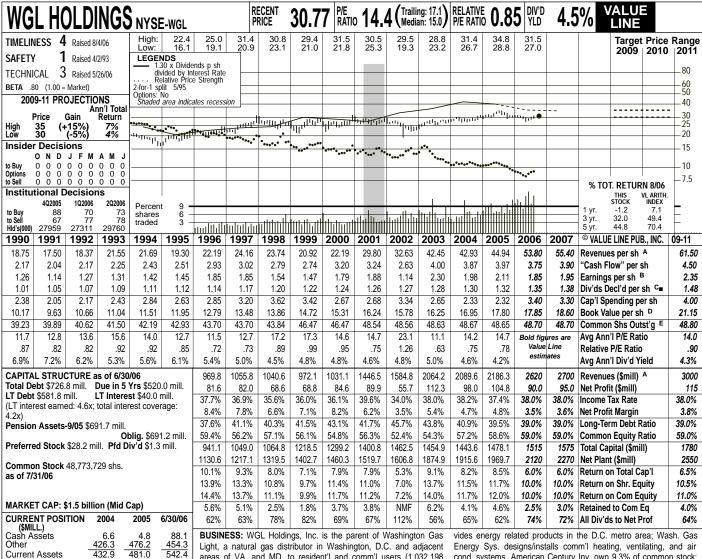
rate out to late decade.

late Dec. ■ Div. reinvest. plan avail. (2% disc.). (C) Incl. regulatory assets (\$121.5 mill.): at 12/31/05, \$4.19 per shr. (D) In millions, adjusted for split.

earnings

Company's Financial Strength Stock's Price Stability B++ 100 Price Growth Persistence **Earnings Predictability** 90

(B) Dividends paid early Apr., Jul., Oct, and © 2006, Value Line Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved. Factual material is obtained from sources believed to be reliable and is provided without warranties of any kind. THE PUBLISHER IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY ERRORS OR OMISSIONS HEREIN. This publication is strictly for subscriber's own, non-commercial, internal use. No part of it may be reproduced, resold, stored or transmitted in any printed, electronic or other form, or used for generating or marketing any printed or electronic publication, service or product.



areas of VA. and MD. to resident'l and comm'l users (1,032,198 meters). Hampshire Gas, a federally regulated sub., operates an underground gas-storage facility in WV. Non-regulated subs.: Wash. Gas Energy Svcs. sells and delivers natural gas and pro-

cond. systems. American Century Inv. own 9.3% of common stock; Off./dir. less than 1% (1/06 proxy). Chrmn. & CEO: J.H. DeGraffenreidt. Inc.: D.C. and VA. Addr.: 1100 H St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20080. Tel.: 202-624-6410. Internet: www.wglholdings.com

ANNUAL RATES Past Past Est'd '03-'05 to '09-'11 of change (per sh) 10 Yrs. 5 Yrs. 7.5% 5.0% 6.0% 2.0% Revenues "Cash Flow" 6.5% Earnings Dividends 6.0% Book Value 3.0% 3.5%

179.0

156.3

412 9

449%

204.9 91.0

411.4

460%

172.4

145.0

465.2

450%

the

Accts Payable Debt Due

Current Liab.

Fix. Chg. Cov

Other

Fiscal	QUART	Full			
Year Ends	Dec.31	Mar.31	Jun.30	Sep.30	Fiscal Year
2003	560.0	851.1	373.2	279.9	2064.2
2004	585.3	862.2	356.9	285.2	2089.6
2005	623.4	929.8	349.0	284.1	2186.3
2006	909.3	1070.4	346.9	293.4	2620
2007	960	1010	380	350	2700
Fiscal	EAF	RNINGS PE	R SHARE	A B	Full
Year Ends	Dec.31	Mar.31	Jun.30	Sep.30	Fiscal Year
2003	1.10	1.61	d.05	d.36	2.30
2004	.81	1.62	d.08	d.37	1.98
2005	.88	1.63	d.17	d.23	2.11
2006	.91	1.16	d.01	d.21	1.85
2007	.95	1.40	d.15	d.25	1.95
Cal-	QUART	TERLY DIV	IDENDS P	AID c ■	Full
endar	Mar.31	Jun.30	Sep.30	Dec.31	Year
2002	.315	.318	.318	.318	1.27
2002	.318	.32	.32	.32	1.28
2003	.32	.325	.325	.325	1.30
2004	.325	.333	.333	.333	1.32
2005	.333	.338	.338		

sale of natural gas and electricity. This should help push nonutility earnings to about \$0.21 a share this year, with additional improvements likely in 2007. WGL expects to file a pair of rate increases. One will soon be with the Virginia State Corporation Commission, and another with the Maryland Public Service Commission next spring. The primary need for the Maryland rate increase is to recover costs associated with the Prince George's County rehabilitation program. The project is scheduled to be completed in

2008 at a \$144 million price tag. If this

WGL Holdings posted solid results in project is fully recovered through a rate inseasonally weak fiscal third crease, which is probable, WGL should quarter (ended June 30th). It reported a realize a \$0.16-a-share boost to earnings. share net loss of \$0.01, which excluded the The company is slated to spend about \$855 million on capital improvement results from the recently sold American projects out to 2010. WGL expects to be-Combustion Industries subsidiary, significantly ahead of last year's figure. The gin construction on its LNG storage facility in late 2008 pending regulatory approval, two years later than previously results were driven by lower operation and maintenance expense, utility customer anticipated due to zoning and other legal challenges, and scheduled to be completed growth, and improved performance at the retail energy-marketing business. In fact, income from this segment nearly doubled by the 2011-2012 winter. However, until from the year-ago period, to \$6.1 million, approval is granted WGL will explore thanks to higher gross margins from the other opportunities to meet its peak day requirements to serve its customers. These shares are best suited for con-

servative investors. The dividend yield stands at 4.5%, above the industry average, while the stock's Safety rank is 1 (Highest). Long term, we look for Washington Gas to add about 25,000-30,000 new utility customers annually, thanks to the new home construction expected in its service areas over the next 20 years. The stock, which is not well ranked for performance is dependable for income. But its price range only inches up over time. Evan I. Blatter September 15, 2006

(A) Fiscal years end Sept. 30th.
(B) Based on diluted shares. Excludes nonrecurring losses: '01, (13¢); '02, (34¢); discontinued operations: '06, (3¢).

Next earnings report due early Nov. **(C)** Dividends historically paid early February, May, August, and November. ■ Dividend reinvestment plan available.

(D) Includes deferred charges and intangibles. '05: \$150.0 million, \$3.08/sh.

(E) In millions, adjusted for stock split.

Company's Financial Strength Stock's Price Stability 100 Price Growth Persistence **Earnings Predictability** 60

© 2006, Value Line Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved. Factual material is obtained from sources believed to be reliable and is provided without warranties of any kind. THE PUBLISHER IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY ERRORS OR OMISSIONS HEREIN. This publication is strictly for subscriber's own, non-commercial, internal use. No part of it may be reproduced, resold, stored or transmitted in any printed, electronic or other form, or used for generating or marketing any printed or electronic publication, service or product