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The Federal Helium supply: How we got here and where we might be going

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Helium is a limited, non-renewable resource with large uncertainties in both supply and price. It's essential for academic researchers across the physical sciences and engineering disciplines who depend on liquid helium to perform experiments and maintain critical instruments. However, because only about three percent of helium is used for scientific research, academic users have little leverage in the helium marketplace. With the Federal Helium Reserve required to sell off its remaining supply and close its doors within the next decade, many in academia are wondering "what's next"? I will discuss the history of the Federal Helium Reserve, including legislation that shaped its development, and possibilities going forward. Additionally, I will describe a new APS initiative where we have formed a small consortium of academic liquid helium users and are allowing the Defense Logistics Agency to represent the consortium in liquid helium contract negotiations.