



DrumBeat: August 9, 2007

Posted by [Leanan](#) on August 9, 2007 - 9:11am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[Jeremy Rifkin: The crisis under the ice](#)

While governments and oil giants are hoping the melting ice will allow them access to the world's last treasure trove of oil and gas, climatologists are deeply worried about something else buried under the ice that, if unearthed, could wreak havoc on the biosphere, with dire consequences for human life.

Much of the Siberian sub-Arctic region, an area the size of France and Germany combined, is a vast, frozen peat bog. Before the most recent Ice Age, the area was mostly grassland, teeming with wildlife. The coming of the glaciers entombed the organic matter below the permafrost, where it has remained ever since. Although the surface of Siberia is largely barren, there is as much organic matter buried underneath the permafrost as there is in all of the world's tropical rain forests.

Now the permafrost is thawing on land and along the seabeds. If it occurs in the presence of oxygen on land, the decomposing of organic matter leads to the production of CO₂. If the permafrost thaws along lake shelves, in the absence of oxygen, the decomposing matter releases methane. Methane is the most potent of the greenhouse gases, with a greenhouse effect 23 times that of CO₂.

[Canadian PM vows to defend Arctic](#)

Canada's prime minister has begun a three-day trip to the Arctic in an effort to assert sovereignty over the region a week after Russia symbolically staked a claim to the North Pole by sending submarines.

..."The Russians sent a submarine to drop a small flag at the bottom of the ocean. We're sending our prime minister to reassert Canadian sovereignty," a senior government official told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because his language was undiplomatic.

[Bridge Disaster Could Mean Gas-Tax Hike](#)

Frank Moretti of TRIP, a national transportation research group, said continuing to oppose higher gasoline taxes could become politically untenable.

The bridge collapse "is going to create a fundamental shift," Moretti said. The public would rather pay more taxes "than have to face the consequences of a crumbling infrastructure."

[Bush rejects raising gas tax for now](#)

President Bush dismissed Thursday raising the federal gasoline tax to repair the nation's bridges at least until Congress changes the way it spends highway money.

"The way it seems to have worked is that each member on that (Transportation) committee gets to set his or her own priorities first," Bush said. "That's not the right way to prioritize the people's money. Before we raise taxes, which could affect economic growth, I would strongly urge the Congress to examine how they set priorities."

[The "Plunge Protection Team" Working Overtime to Save US Stock Market](#)

US light crude oil briefly shot-up to a new record high of \$78.77 per barrel, and the DJI-30 sank further to 13,150. It was looking pretty grim for Wall Street bulls, with PPT chief Paulson, situated far away in Beijing, trying to head-off a trade war between the US Congress and China next year. And when the cat's away, the mice will play. Was the mythical PPT was asleep at the switch while Wall Street burned?

But then it happened! At around 3:20 pm EST on August 1st, the DJI-30 began to move up strongly and without hesitation. By the closing bell at 4:00 pm, the DJI-30 had skyrocketed by 230-points above its lows, to close 150-points higher on the day. The mainstream media pointed to the possibility of computer buy programs, which kicked into high gear, after the S&P 500 held above its 200-day moving average.

[Biofuels give us food for thought](#)

At first sight, these renewable fuels seem a great idea, cutting the use of the depleting fossil fuel stocks, but the downside is that pressure on land use drives up food costs across the globe.

[Sri Lanka Petroleum Minister pledges not to increase fuel price again this year](#)

Sri Lanka Minister of Petroleum and Petroleum Resources Development A.H.M. Fowzie today pledged not to raise the petroleum prices again within this year.

The Minister participating in the cabinet press briefing said that the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) was not losing now. However, the CPC loses 20% from the fuel supplied to the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) at a subsidized rate.

[Car rental outfits head in a green direction](#)

Faced with sluggish rentals of sport utility vehicles and eco-conscious consumers demanding cars with higher gas mileage, auto rental companies have scrambled in recent months to stock their fleets with more fuel-efficient vehicles -- including cutting-edge hybrid vehicles and flex-fuel cars that run mainly on ethanol.

[Electricity Deregulation: Taking the Next Step](#)

The North American Electric Reliability Corporation projects a 19 percent growth in peak summer demand for electricity within 10 years - whereas the amount of available power is projected to grow only 6 percent, according to FERC. Available power can be rationed by allowing the market to set prices, or it will be rationed by blackouts and brownouts. However, many consumers will be able to avoid huge price hikes, or at least slow the growth in their energy bills, by using smart technology to manage their electricity use.

[John Michael Greer: Cities in the deindustrial future](#)

Go further back and you'll find the same thing in every secular millennialist movement the United States has seen since the dawn of the 20th century. Whether the apocalypse du jour is nuclear war, pandemic disease, racial conflict, Communist takeover, fascist police state takeover, the imminent arrival of Antichrist, or what have you, the accepted way to deal with it is to flee to some isolated location in the mountains and wait for the rubble to stop bouncing. I've tried to challenge the kneejerk application of this same way of thinking to the consequences of peak oil in a number of previous posts, but there's another side to the picture -- the widespread notion that cities in the aftermath of peak oil will be deathtraps by definition.

[Are Rising Oil Prices Good For The Economy?](#)

However, as soon as the price of Oil begins to head higher, economists become very nervous and fears of an inflationary shock ala 1973 resurface. Recent history has shown that a near 8 fold increase in the price of oil has not resulted in an outbreak of inflation, a recession or stock market collapse. In fact the stock market has surged higher during this same period which begs the question, are rising Oil prices good for the economy?

[Measure targets fatty fuel tax break](#)

The legislation, which passed the Democratic-controlled House easily, doesn't mention ConocoPhillips or Tyson by name.

But on page 46, under Sec. 203. Extension and Modification of Credits for Biodiesel and Renewable Diesel, paragraph (b), subparagraph (1), the bill would strike language from the Energy Policy Act of 2005 that reads "using a thermal depolymerization process."

And that reference — oblique as it may be — could prove a painful blow to the two companies.

[Nigeria records drop in crude oil production in 2006, says CBN](#)

Aggregate crude oil production declined from an average of 2.53 million barrels per day in 2005 to 2.23 million barrels per day (mbd) in 2006, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has said.

[Russia vs. Canada at the North Pole](#)

Canada and Russia are now at unlikely loggerheads, disputing territory that was out of the question for resource harvests just a few decades ago.

But while Canada looks just below the Arctic - to the fabled Northwest Passage now opening between the ice sheets of the country's majority mass, and the bountiful oil sands of Alberta that rocketed Canada up just behind Saudi Arabia in estimated oil reserve rankings - its ultimate goal seems to be the northernmost climes of the Great White North. Canada has promised to build six to eight new patrol ships to monitor the Northwest Passage, though the United States says Canada has no territorial claim. These waters are as diplomatically murky as they are frigid.

[Ministry: Moscow Court Okays Seizure of Russneft](#)

All of the shares of Russian oil firm Russneft have been seized as part of a criminal probe into tax evasion and "illegal business practices", the interior ministry said today.

On July 31, Moscow's Lefortovo "approved the request to arrest 100 percent of the shares of this company. The shares have now been seized," the ministry said in a statement.

[LUKoil unperturbed over possible loss of its American filling stations](#)

Green Oil sustained losses from skyrocketing prices of oil and oil products. The winners in this situation - just as always - are large oil companies that have producing and refining assets, including the three defendants in the current suit.

However, the claim that LUKoil, Aramco and PdVSA conspired to raise prices of oil and

oil products sounds ridiculous to me, as many other companies could be accused of the same sin.

[Food That Travels Well](#)

But is reducing food miles necessarily good for the environment? Researchers at Lincoln University in New Zealand, no doubt responding to Europe's push for "food miles labeling," recently published a study challenging the premise that more food miles automatically mean greater fossil fuel consumption. Other scientific studies have undertaken similar investigations. According to this peer-reviewed research, compelling evidence suggests that there is more — or less — to food miles than meets the eye.

[Growing Our Own And More On The Bullseye Diet](#)

It was mainly Peak Oil that drove me out into my garden with a new mission; no longer just to grow a few tomatoes for fun each summer, but in an effort to grow the majority of the food my family eats. I set out a goal of producing more calories than I consume on my own property and within 5 years. I called my project "Growing My Own." But there were others factors tugging at me, entreating me to take personal responsibility for the needs of my diet.

[Editorial: Urban farming's time has come](#)

Paula Sobie and Martin Scaia started City Harvest in February, advertising on the Internet for people who wanted to use all or part of their property for an urban garden.

In return, the homeowner would receive a portion of the organic vegetables, while the couple would sell the rest at markets, to restaurants and through the Small Potatoes Urban Delivery (SPUD) program.

But the couple ran afoul of an Oak Bay bylaw that forbids growing plants for sale, introduced in 2001 after the Beach Drive estate "Riffington" was given farm status because the owners sold more than \$2,500 of plants annually from the property's gardens. Farm status meant the property tax bill was slashed; Oak Bay council quickly moved to restrict urban farming and protect its tax base.

[Marijuana crops also bad for environment](#)

Come September, marijuana growers who have labored for five months in some of California's most remote country will abandon their secret gardens, taking their multimillion-dollar crops.

What will they leave behind? Irrigation tubes that snake for a mile or more over

forested ridges. Pesticides that have drained into creeks and entered the food chain, sickening wildlife. Piles of trash and human waste in the most rugged and bucolic drainages.

[Sustainable Living: Getting ahead on renewable energy](#)

...Donovan also points out "solar panels feed energy back into the grid during the hottest part of the day, when electricity usage is highest." Common sense would say that electric utilities would love to have help meeting the peak energy demand.

"NOT SO," said solar homeowner Thurston. "Ever since we divorced the delivery of electricity from the generating of it, utilities no longer have a vested interest in green energy. We've created a disincentive for utilities to net-meter solar energy."

[Primary '07: Attack of the Jean Godden Clones](#)

We much prefer Al Runte, the former UW historian who, despite his dismissal in certain other local media venues as "The Nutty Professor," reminds us for many a good reason of Charlie Chong, the glorious gadfly (rest his soul) who shook up the council in the late 1990s with his healthy hostility towards both the infamous "Seattle Way" and the public-private partnerships then festering in City Hall. Runte similarly has expressed a healthy contempt for the influence that developers have had in the City Council's decision-making process in recent years. He also has a strong progressive agenda, including and especially impact fees for new development as part of the solution to creeping gentrification. Crucially for us, Runte is apparently the only council candidate who considers Peak Oil to be a credible sustainability issue; he wants to see a heavy emphasis on hydro and electric power in future local transportation initiatives, to prepare Seattle for a low-carbon future. Call that "nutty" if you must; we prefer to call it "independent thinking"--in other words, leadership.

[Snazzy parking meter upgrades show a Catch-22 in transit funding](#)

And in a city that officials like to tout as bike friendly and getting in gear for a carless Peak Oil world, the meter upgrades also represent more than the Portland Office of Transportation wants to spend on bicycle safety improvements—\$300,000—in the next fiscal year.

[Opec 'need not boost output in September'](#)

Opec does not need to raise oil output at a meeting on September 11, despite calls from consumers for more crude to lower prices from near a record high, an Opec delegate said yesterday.

The comments are the latest indication that Opec, source of more than a third of the world's oil, is holding firm in the face of calls from the US and the International Energy Agency for higher oil output.

[US should consider gas tax: Ford chief](#)

The United States should consider imposing a European-style gasoline tax if it hopes to improve energy security and tackle global warming, the head of Ford Motor Co. said Wednesday.

"The way to get at it is to make an economic decision just like in Europe where the fuel prices are seven or eight dollars a gallon," Ford chief executive officer Allan Mulally said. "Then our behavior would change dramatically."

[Seoul to invest billions for energy resources](#)

South Korea will spend 10 trillion won in the next decade to compete with China and India to secure oil and natural gas supplies as an expanding global economy lifts energy prices.

[Russia hardens EU resolve to seek new energy supply](#)

Renewed tension between Russia and Belarus has yet to disrupt energy flows, but still it has sharpened Western Europe's desire to curb dependency on Moscow if it possibly can.

[Malaysia defies doubts, history with pipeline plan](#)

Some analysts say it remains cheaper and potentially quicker to sail around Singapore than to unload a super-tanker at Yan, pipe the crude to Bachok and put it on another tanker.

OSK Research cited the cost to ship oil from the Gulf to the Far East using a very large crude carrier at \$2.28 per barrel, and using the pipeline at \$2.92.

[Russia has eyes for Iraq's oil](#) (audio)

Iraq might be ready to do some big-time oil trading with Russia to make good on old debts. But first the two nations would have to figure out the not-small issue of security in Iraq.

[Nigeria captors free Briton, Bulgarian](#)

Kidnappers released a British and a Bulgarian hostage in Nigeria's restive southern oil region Wednesday, while the young son of a local legislator was seized in a separate incident and gunbattles raged for a third day.

[Oil drilling off Alaska: Cheney's ill-advised crusade](#)

On June 29 the Bush administration quietly approved a keystone of Vice President Dick Cheney's energy policy: furthering our addiction to oil through the 5-Year Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program. The program governs the sale of all offshore oil and gas leases in federal waters over the next five years and anticipates the drilling of more than 10 billion barrels of oil and more than 45 trillion cubic feet of natural gas in some of our most pristine and sensitive marine habitats.

[Nigeria: Solar Energy And Competitive Advantage](#)

Solar electric power systems are an effective energy conservation programme because they conserve costly conventional power for urban areas and town market centres including industrial, commercial and private uses. This will allow for decentralised solar generated power for lighting and satisfying basic electrical needs.

[Biofuels shift seen to put major squeeze on food prices](#)

A global shift toward renewable energy could jack up food prices by up to 80 percent as crops and farmland are diverted to producing biofuels, an international agricultural think-tank warned Thursday.

[Japan looks to turn straw into biofuel amid price crunch](#)

Japan will study turning inedible crops, such as straw, into biofuel to run cars amid concern that the growing popularity of ethanol is inflating food prices, an official said Friday.

[Smaller, Cheaper Biofuel Reactors](#)

Researchers at the University of Minnesota have developed a fast way to convert sawdust and waste biomass directly into a mixture of gases that can be burned to generate electricity or made into liquid fuels such as diesel. If the process can be scaled up, it could be a more energy-efficient method for making biofuels by allowing for small, fast reactors located close to biomass sources.

[Data centers suck down energy, mostly for AC](#)

The extremely air-conditioned computer farms known as data centers are the gas-guzzling jalopies of the technology world. Some require 40 or 50 times more power than comparably sized office space.

So with energy costs high and environmental friendliness making for good public relations, more tech companies are touting ways they are "greening" data centers, which serve up Web pages, swap Internet traffic, and process and store business information.

But it's a lot easier to put out a news release than to build a data center with a significantly smaller environmental footprint. Even as efficiency improvements are reducing the energy gulped by many kinds of hardware, the industry's overall electricity consumption could double from 2006 to 2011 as demand grows.



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