



Leadership, Activism, Mancur Olson, Groups, Localism, and Conferences...

Posted by [Prof. Goose](#) on August 3, 2005 - 1:45pm

I've been doing a lot of thinking about activism these days...and the best ways to focus that activism to bring about a soft landing for our society in the face of the problems of peak oil. Individual action is all well-and-good, and we can conserve...but it is only going to be when we bring unified voices to bear on policy-makers that tangible changes are going to be made. How do we best do that? There are ideas floating around for courses of action such as [demand destruction through tax increases](#) and [Heinberg's plan](#)...but how do we best get government(s) to discuss the problems and implement solutions?

There are the obvious courses of action, of course. These being contacting your elected representatives, city planners, resource specialists, and the like...one, just to make them aware, and two, to see if anything has been pondered. (I have done some of that...and as I will post next week, the discussions have been interesting, but really only of any worth at the city and county level. But, I'll spend more time on that next week...).

The catch is that if these kinds of plans are only implemented in a few localities, they will not matter all that much in the grand scheme except for those involved in them. We need the federal government involved if there is going to be a national solution.

In many ways, however, federalism is going to stand in the way of innovation, I fear. If we wait for the federal government to do anything (as we have seen), it will be way too late because it will, at best, be terribly slow, deliberative, and incremental. Ergo, it seems to me that many of the policy-based solutions to this problem will be discovered locally, especially those where communities decide to move toward sustainability, and then germinate up to the state and federal level (I doubt even state-wide officials will take these problems seriously in the next two or three years, they face ridiculous budgetary constraints to do much of anything with the recent devolution of expenses away from DC back to the states).

[Mancur Olson was right about a lot of things](#) (and [here's another good piece on his work](#) as well), one of them being that large groups are problematic (think "herding cats") and are tough to get anything done in...the smaller the group the less likely free riders will exist, etc., etc.

There are already some groups forming. In seven days, it will be [United Oil Awareness Day](#). [Oil awareness meetup groups](#) seem to be a good idea if you have the time and inclination and are proximate to one of these groups. It is also good to see local blogs on the topic of peak oil forming, such as [PO-NYC](#) and [Oil Awareness-SF](#), to discuss these local solutions.

Even more importantly, however, I think from the leadership side of this movement, conferences are going to be the real key to discussion and development of ideas. So, I wanted to bring the upcoming [Community Solution](#) conference and the [newly-formed ASPO-USA's](#) conference to your

If you're in Ohio (YS is just east of Dayton), you have to head to the [Community Solution conference](#). Richard Heinberg and Mike Shuman are the featured speakers...and it's 9/23-25.

If you're around Denver, Colorado, [ASPO-USA is holding a high-level conference](#) to discuss the impacts of a peak in world oil production, November 10-11, 2005. Keynote speakers include Matt Simmons, author of *Twilight in the Desert*, a study of Saudi Arabia's petroleum resources, and Congressman Roscoe Bartlett, (R-Md.; invited).

(Yes, these cost money. Yes, there's usually going to be a membership fee in addition to a registration fee. But, yes...this is the price the organization must charge in order to put these things together and bring in the leading voices.)

In the end, leadership is going to matter. Local efforts are going to matter. However, it is only when both of these parts form a cohesive whole will the voices be strong enough to actually change public policy...and we might have a chance of changing our policies in time to change the course of history, even just a little bit.

Technorati Tags: [peak oil](#), [oil](#)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 United States License](#).