



## DrumBeat: May 2, 2008

Posted by [Leanan](#) on May 2, 2008 - 9:13am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

### [Hunting for oil beneath the ice](#)

*There's a new rush for petroleum from Alaska to the North Pole. Can ConocoPhillips and other energy giants find another Saudi Arabia under the ice?*

...The folks at Conoco surveyed this slice of barren land about a decade ago. But times are a bit desperate up here in North America's largest oil region, and they've come back. "We're looking to see if we left anything behind," says Jim Darnall, an acquisition geophysicist for ConocoPhillips, as he brushes ice off his bushy gray beard. "We're trying to milk this field anyway we can."

Is this what America's late-20th-century oil paradise has been reduced to - the petroleum equivalent of rooting for loose change in the cushions of a sofa? U.S. crude production is at its lowest since 1949, and nowhere has that decline been steeper than in Alaska, where oil output is less than half what it was a decade ago.

### [Fatih Birol interview: 'Leave oil before it leaves us'](#)

Hunger for energy vs. energy shortage: While the demand for oil is on the rise, the production is decreasing - shortages, escalating prices and inflation are looming. When talking to energy politician Astrid Schneider, Fatih Birol, chief economist of the IEA demands a change in policy from the member countries. His motto: leave oil before it leaves us.

### [Asking the right questions about high gas prices](#)

The notion of "peak oil" -- which holds that the world's production of oil is at its all-time high this year, or within a few years -- has recently become credible in the business community. While most everybody will agree that petroleum is a depleting resource with a limited supply, the question many now wrestle with is: "How much more oil is there left in the ground?" Considerable debate wages about the real level of petroleum reserves, and how many more years it will last.

Unfortunately this discussion is a distraction from the practical questions that business managers should be asking. A much better question to ask would be: "How much longer

will it be before our organization starts to suffer serious adverse impacts because the world supply of oil is dwindling?" When I make reference to serious adverse impacts, I am talking about, among other things, rapidly escalating costs associated with petroleum fuels, and fuel shortages occasioned by geo-political events such as resource wars and embargos.

### [Lawmaker to gov: What happens at the end of oil?](#)

On Wednesday, the House passed a "peak oil" resolution 81 to 7 that calls for the Legislature and the gov to get ready for the day when we run out of gas. (The term refers to the idea that we've maxed out our global oil production, and we're on a slow decline from here on out.)

House File 995, sponsored by Rep. Bill Hilty, a DFLer from Finlayson, resolves that "the Legislature supports the undertaking of a statewide assessment study in order to inventory state activities and their corollary resource requirements, evaluating the impact in each area to a decline in petroleum availability and to higher prices, with the aim of developing a comprehensive state plan of action and response to Peak Oil."

### [The Day the Gas Dried Up](#)

"You know what's worse than a slow computer?" a professor in Texas once asked his class. "No computer." He was telling the class about his son who was complaining that his processor wouldn't go fast enough. Now many Americans are complaining that gasoline prices are too high as they crest the astronomical price of four dollars a gallon. They might spare a thought for the Scottish who would be grateful to pay \$8.30 a gallon, if only they could get it. For rationing and actual dry gas stations have arrived in what was once an early engine of the Industrial Revolution and later a major oil exporter, while the government warns against the spectre of panic buying and hoarding.

### [Eyeing Hot Weather, Hurricanes, Gas Prices Could Test Records](#)

U.S. natural gas prices could move closer toward record highs this summer if gas inventories don't grow substantially over the next several weeks.

As in past years, gas prices will take their cue this summer from the weather, particularly the length and intensity of heat in key consuming areas of the U.S. Midwest and East and whether one or more tropical storms or hurricanes do any damage in the energy producing U.S. Gulf of Mexico.

"A lot of people are looking at natural gas to take out the all-time high this summer or early fall," said Mario Chavez, a broker at UBS Securities in New York. The looming hurricane season, a recent loss of supply from the U.S. Gulf and a drop in LNG imports have been keeping gas prices near \$11/MMBtu, he said, still well off a record high north of \$15.

### [GOP's Bill Breaks with Bush on Oil Stockpiles](#)

With voters clamoring about high gasoline prices, Senate Republicans unveiled energy legislation Thursday that echoes President Bush's call for more oil drilling but would interrupt the administration's efforts to fill the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

Senate Democrats, meanwhile, are expected to unveil their own energy legislation next week that would likewise halt deliveries to the nation's emergency oil stockpile, while also slapping the oil companies with a windfall profits tax.

### [U.S. Oil Addicts Deny Need To Change Energy Policy](#)

The addicts have spoken. Not only do they want more oil and gas drilling, anywhere and all the time. They also want to continue huge tax breaks for oil companies that are rolling in dough. For decades they have supported giant oil industry tax breaks like the oil depletion allowance. Now they oppose even short-term tax credits for renewable energy and energy efficiency -- unless future generations pay for them by adding them to the federal deficit created by wasteful spending and tax breaks.

Like most addicts, they are fooling themselves, and trying to fool their friends and family.

### [Money woes could stop road work](#)

SPRINGFIELD — Sen. Dave Syverson said today that local transportation projects, including bridge repairs at Interstate 39 near U.S. 20, could be in jeopardy because the Illinois Department of Transportation threatened “drastic actions” because of a money shortage.

Christine Reed, an IDOT official, wrote in an April 25 letter to the Illinois Asphalt Pavement Association that IDOT's costs for “road salt, fuel, extra help, overtime, equipment wear and tear, and repairs” have far exceeded budgeted levels, thanks to a rough winter.

### [Surplus U.S. food supplies dry up](#)

While the previous surpluses were costly and sharply criticized, much of the food found its way to the poor, here and abroad. Today, says USDA Undersecretary Mark Keenum, “Our cupboard is bare.”

U.S. government food surpluses have evaporated because, with record high prices, farmers are selling their crops on the open market, not handing them over to the government through traditional price-support programs that make up for deficiencies in market price.

### [Crumbcatchers](#)

In the Roaring Twenties my grandfather, Diamond Ben, was a flashy guy. He had a taste for Cadillacs. He owned a tux and a diamond stickpin. He had a big house by the beach, and two garages on Broadway. He hung out with celebrities.

But my grandfather lost the house and the two garages and the flashy life in the early Thirties, and my mother's family was forced to move into a tenement apartment in the Bronx.

... He ended up in the basement of a bakery. Above, in the retail shop, when crumbs of bread and cake fell onto the floor, they were swept down into a hole. The hole had a funnel attached to it. My grandfather stood under it, catching and bagging the crumbs for resale. He was the crumbcatcher.

My mother, who couldn't go to college because she had to help to support the family, often talked about going to cafeterias during lunch to make catsup soup out of hot water and free condiments.

### [U.S. eyes shift away from corn ethanol](#)

Worried about high food prices, Congress tries to push the biofuel industry to use nonfood crops.

### [China looks abroad amid global grain shortage: report](#)

China is looking at farms in places like Russia and South America as it seeks new ways to feed the world's largest population amid a global grain supply shortage, state media said Tuesday.

### [Chavez shops to shorten Venezuela food lines](#)

CARACAS (Reuters) - Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez is on a shopping spree to combat sporadic food shortages that have dented his popularity, using record income from oil exports to offset the impact of global food prices.

### [Ticker tape still ain't spaghetti](#)

There was a global food crisis in 1946. Then, as now, the U.N. convened a working group to deal with it. At its meeting, the head of the U.N. Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, former New York City Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, said, "Ticker tape ain't spaghetti." In other words, the stock market doesn't feed the hungry. His words are true today.

### [No easy access to fresh groceries in many parts of Seattle](#)

It's easier to find fried chicken gizzards than a piece of fruit in the quickie marts lining the 3-mile Delridge Way corridor.

That's one of many Seattle neighborhoods that University of Washington researchers found have no access to a grocery store within a 30-minute bus ride. In wealthier single-family areas, such as west Ballard or along Lake Washington, walking to buy food often isn't easy.

That makes it hard to combat climate change and create a more livable city. For lower-income residents without a car, poor transit access to grocery stores can be an immediate barrier to healthful eating.

### [Economic and Other Implications of Switching from Coal to Natural Gas at the Capitol Power Plant and at Electricity-Generating Units Nationwide](#)

Nearly all of the greenhouse gas emissions from House operations consist of carbon dioxide and are associated with electricity purchased from utilities and the combustion of fossil fuels in the Capitol Power Plant (CPP), which provides steam and chilled water for heating and cooling the Capitol building and 23 surrounding facilities. The Architect of the Capitol (AOC) operates CPP. In June 2007, the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) of the House of Representatives released the Green the Capitol initiative (the initiative) at the direction of the Speaker and the Majority Leader. Among other goals, the initiative calls for the House of Representatives to operate in a carbon-neutral manner by the end of the 110th Congress (December 2008).

### [Streams of blood, or streams of peace](#)

Talk of thirsty armies marching to battle is surely overdone, but violence and drought can easily go together.

### [Critics: Myanmar biofuel drive uses forced labor](#)

BANGKOK, Thailand (AP) — An activist group on Thursday called a plan by Myanmar's military rulers to grow a biofuel crop "draconian," alleging that it was using forced labor

and contributing to food shortages.

The fiercely critical report, released by activists linked to the exile-based opposition, says the biofuel policy hurts an already ailing agriculture industry.

### [Lawmakers being forced to give up gas-guzzling cars](#)

WASHINGTON -- Rep. Elton Gallegly of Simi Valley likes his taxpayer-funded Ford Expedition. He isn't worried that it's not the most fuel-efficient car. It's reliable, suits his mountainous district and is cheaper to lease than many other vehicles.

"It's not a Cadillac. It's not a Lincoln. It's a Ford," the Republican congressman said with exasperation.

But like it or not, Gallegly and other lawmakers will have to give up gas-hungry SUVs and luxury sedans for leased vehicles that are more eco-correct, such as Toyota's Prius.

And some are in a high-octane fit about it.

### [Limitations of charcoal as an effective carbon sink](#)

*Fire-derived charcoal is thought to be an important carbon sink. However, a SLU paper in Science shows that charcoal promotes soil microbes and causes a large loss of soil carbon.*

There has been greatly increasing attention given to the potential of 'biochar', or charcoal made from biological tissues (e.g., wood) to serve as a long term sink of carbon in the soil. This is because charcoal is carbon-rich and breaks down extremely slowly, persisting in soil for thousands of years. This has led to the suggestion being seriously considered by policy makers worldwide that biochar could be produced in large quantities and stored in soils. This would in turn increase ecosystem carbon sequestration, and thereby counteract human induced increases in carbon-based greenhouse gases and help combat global warming.

However, a new study by Professors David Wardle, Marie-Charlotte Nilsson and Olle Zackrisson at SLU, the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, in Umeå, scheduled to appear in this Friday's issue of the prestigious journal Science, suggests that these supposed benefits of biochar may be somewhat overstated.

### [A city on the edge](#)

Looming peak oil and plunging housing affordability are especially troubling for a sprawling, car-reliant city such as Melbourne. The city's rail network stopped expanding with its suburbs long ago, leaving two-thirds of residents beyond its reach and creating a



massive imbalance between inner and outer Melbourne.

### [Peak oil expert also makes presentation at BCC](#)

FALL RIVER — In celebration of Earth Day, Richard Heinberg, a world renowned expert on peak oil and its impact on industrial society, delivered a public lecture last Tuesday afternoon to a near capacity crowd in the Jackson Arts Center at Bristol Community College. His talk, titled "Cheap Oil — Going, Going, GONE!," captivated the crowd of students, faculty and members of the public who were interested in learning more about the world's oil crisis and what it means for America and the world.

### [The future of energy](#)

If you believe Richard Heinberg, then you think we're facing some very serious problems.

But if you believe Van Jones, then we have hope in the future.

If we act soon.

### [Pakistan - Alarming rise in loadshedding](#)

LAHORE: The period of power load-shedding has been further increased to eight hours in the urban areas and more than 10 hours in the rural areas from 10 hours in the rural areas and six to seven hours in the urban areas.

This has not only aggravated the miseries of the masses in summer but also added to the problems facing industrial and agriculture sectors.

### [Namibia: Dangers of the 3rd Oil Crisis](#)

The looming serious world-wide dangers of the creeping 3rd oil crisis - imminent global economic recession.

### [Viet Nam: Dealers struggle with high petrol prices](#)

HA NOI — The price cap on petroleum may be a threat to the nation's oil supplies. Fuel dealers are already suffering losses because high world oil prices. This makes it even harder to get extra capital to import more oil - or to even think about getting it.

## [Gas 'n' dashes growing as fuel prices skyrocket](#)

Desperate times fuel desperate measures.

The grainy, unofficial mug shots covering the wall at a Pioneer gas station on Upper Gage are proof. Pictures of people who fill up and drive away without paying.

They're called "drive-offs," and staff at area stations say they are increasing along with gas prices.

## [The future of travel](#)

So what does the next 30 years hold for our holiday? Futurologists agree on one thing: more travel. The World Tourism Organisation, International Air Passenger Association and anyone else worth their salt forecast that global, tourism will continue to thrive as the world's largest industry. And like much of the world's business, we must look east for the biggest growth. Hundreds of millions of Chinese, Indian and other nationals will be able to afford to travel like never before.

## [Rising prices spread fear at the pumps](#)

You drive past the gas station in Orleans and the sign says your fill is going for \$1.22 a litre. Blame it on Russia.

The world's largest oil producer reported that its output decreased for the first time in 10 years. It delivered one per cent less oil than a year ago.

What's disconcerting about this little-known fact, trumpeted recently on the front page of The Wall Street Journal but getting little play elsewhere, is that the scenario unfolding in Russia is being repeated the world over. Essentially, its Siberian oil fields are aging, becoming tired, the easy-to-reach oil declining.

It is not alone. The world's great oil deposits -- the North Sea, Mexico's Cantarell deposit and Alaska's Prudhoe Bay -- are seeing their production diminish despite astronomical demand.

So what of production from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries? Its output is flat, in part due to declining fields.

## [Exxon profit soars, but misses forecasts](#)

Despite Exxon's investments in finding new oil, the company production declined. In addition to oil production falling, overall production including natural gas fell by 3 percent.



That drop will likely be noticed by proponents of the "peak oil" theory, who contend world oil production has peaked and will run out in fairly short order.

### ['Green' procurement goes into the black](#)

It can be difficult to quantify in dollar terms what the impact has been, but Herman Miller is still forging ahead with its design for environment protocol, which emphasizes a Green design throughout the lifecycle of a product. The company's goal is to have 100% of its products comply with the company's policy of zero landfill and zero hazardous waste generation by 2020. Right now Charon estimates about 29% of the company's products hit that mark, with a goal of 50% compliance on the horizon by 2010.

A long-term perspective is key in keeping a Green program on track, says Charon, because Green procurement can keep a company ahead of the competition. "We're actively looking for advanced materials that are nonpetroleum based, because in the future if we're at peak oil and those resources go away, you need to know what other materials are out there to keep you in business so you can make products for customers," he says.

### [Rob Hopkins: Eco Worrier](#)

The era of cheap oil is over and our economic system is doomed, believes environmentalist Rob Hopkins. So is he gloomy? Not a bit of it. It's such a tremendous opportunity.

### [New Zealand: Paving Way for Smart Ideas](#)

As if the price of petrol hadn't soared enough lately, Clark & Co intend to amplify the agony by applying two extra levies -- to fund regional development and bio-fuel research. As the justification for these doesn't appear to be overburdened with intellectual rigour, it isn't surprising John Key doesn't agree.

Given that the high fuel prices are here to stay, traffic growth will slow -- building more roads is pointless.

### [Food troubles are here to stay](#)

The government sends calming signals and says no dramatic shortages are expected. The Economist says do nothing, market forces will sort it all out. But as the global food-price crisis hit Israel this week, something told us we are not being told the whole story.

Around the world food prices are soaring. Since January 2006, the price of rice has risen

by 217 percent. Wheat, corn and soybean prices have more than doubled, and in several countries, milk and meat prices have also doubled.

### [A Global Clarion Call to Bold Action;](#)

Throughout the first phase of the history our species, we have operated with the assumption that there has never been enough to go around for everyone. Throughout all of recorded human history we have existed within a system based on scarcity. The perceived problem was: who gets what? Who survives and who dies? Every society has had a different system for deciding that unfair question. Survival has been decided through violence by tribal battles or global war during the entire Human Story! I demand a New Story.

We need to redefine the human problem; Rather than deciding how to cut up the scarcity pie, we need to bake a much bigger prosperity pie. To quote my brother, O.T., such a pie will be "LUSCIOUS!"

### [Russian April Oil Output Falls to Lowest in 18 Months](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Russia, the world's second-largest oil supplier, produced the least amount of crude in 18 months in April as aging fields and rising costs threaten the country with the first annual decline in oil output in a decade.

Production dropped to 9.72 million barrels a day (39.8 million metric tons a month), 0.8 percent less than in April last year and only slightly higher than in October 2006, according to data released today by CDU TEK, the dispatch center for the Energy Ministry. Compared with March, output fell 0.4 percent.

Russia's output may have peaked as producers struggle with aging fields, rising costs and increasingly remote new deposits, Moscow-based OAO Lukoil and OAO TNK-BP, the country's two- biggest independent oil companies, said in April. The finance and energy ministries are working on tax-cut proposals by July to stimulate investment.

### [Up \\$10.9 Billion, Exxon Worries About New Tax](#)

"Crude prices are at historic highs, and we recognize that they are having a significant impact on many in our society through higher gasoline prices and higher energy costs in other sectors," said Exxon's vice president for public affairs, Kenneth P. Cohen. He warned, however, that "high prices also have the potential to result in bad public policy, such as windfall profits tax, that will hurt consumers in the long run."

But Sen. Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.), who has proposed such a tax on oil companies, issued a statement saying: "Once again, consumers' pain is Exxon's gain. Oil companies are racking up obscene profits left and right while American families are stretched to the

limit by skyrocketing gas prices. It's high time for Big Oil to pay its fair share."

### [Brief fuel price protest at Shell UK refinery](#)

LONDON, May 2 (Reuters) - About 50 people briefly blocked access to Royal Dutch Shell's 245,000 barrel per day Stanlow refinery in Wales on Thursday night in protest against high fuel prices, the company said.

### [Exxon Says Production Resumes in Nigeria After Strike](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Exxon Mobil Corp. said its Nigerian oil unit started producing after the company and an oil workers union ended an eight day strike yesterday.

``We have started production," Gloria Essien-Danner, a spokeswoman for Exxon's Nigeria unit, said in a telephone interview today. Essien-Danner said the company would be issuing a statement with further details.

### [Nigeria orders closed-door trial for oil rebel](#)

JOS, Nigeria (Reuters) - A court in Nigeria has ordered the politically-sensitive trial of Niger Delta rebel leader Henry Okah to take place behind closed doors, in a move expected to anger factions of the armed militant group.

### [British MPs urge suspending biofuel obligations for suppliers](#)

LONDON, May 2 (Xinhua) -- British parliamentary members urged the government to suspend its biofuel obligations for oil suppliers, as Britain's overproducing biodiesel industry is facing, among others, challenges from the cheap and heavily-subsided U.S. biofuel, Financial Times reported on Friday.

Britain's biodiesel industry has already undergone a precipitous collapse, hit by cheap foreign imports including subsidized biodiesel from the U.S., and suffers from severe overcapacity.

### [Green tax revolt: Britons 'will not foot bill to save planet'](#)

More than seven in 10 voters insist that they would not be willing to pay higher taxes in order to fund projects to combat climate change, according to a new poll.

The survey also reveals that most Britons believe "green" taxes on 4x4s, plastic bags

and other consumer goods have been imposed to raise cash rather than change our behaviour, while two-thirds of Britons think the entire green agenda has been hijacked as a ploy to increase taxes.

### [Emir of Qatar Tours New Orleans to See Fruit of His \\$100 Million Donation](#)

NEW ORLEANS — One of the world's richest men toured one of America's poorest cities on Tuesday, a whistle-stop visitor from a distant land come to see his good works in a place still needing a stranger's kindness.

### [Bikes-for-employees test at Children's Hospital](#)

The list of companies offering employees bicycles as a cleaner, cheaper way to get to work is about to grow.

Children's Hospital and Regional Medical Center said Wednesday it plans to test such a program in mid-July. In exchange for a commitment to bike to work at least two days a week, employees will get one of four different types of bicycles, including electrically assisted models "for people who need help with the hills," said Paolo Nunes-Ueno, the hospital's transportation manager.

### [The Peak Oil Crisis: The Half-Life For Air Travel](#)

In recent weeks, airlines around the world have been reporting substantial losses, declaring bankruptcy or completely shutting down. So far the losses have been mostly of small airlines, but many of the large ones have started to thrash around for merger partners. At \$3.71 a gallon, jet fuel is now the single largest expense an airline faces.

In 2000, the airlines fuel bill was \$14 billion. It is now pushing \$60 billion and climbing. Southwest, the most profitable carrier, recently announced that this year's fuel bill will be \$500 million more than last year and equal to 2007 profits. During the first quarter of 2008 American airlines lost \$328 million; Delta lost \$274 million; United lost \$537 million; Continental \$80 million; Northwest \$191 million; and US Airways \$236 million. Only Southwest Airlines, which did a better job of hedging its fuel than the others, made a profit.

It is clear we are going to see major changes in air travel shortly.

### [Oil prices rally as Turkey bombs Kurds in Iraq](#)

LONDON (AFP) - The price of oil climbed back above 113 dollars on Friday in reaction to news that Turkish planes bombed Kurdish rebel hideouts in oil-rich Iraq overnight,

analysts said.

### [Lower oil production is the real story](#)

Eleven billion dollars is not enough.

That, at first blush, seemed to explain how Exxon Mobil Corp. could earn that much money in three months and still see its stock fall 4 percent.

Wall Street expected more, and so did Exxon Mobil investors. At a time of record oil prices, America's biggest oil company reported an earnings increase that was the smallest among its peers.

The profit is what captures everyone's attention, but there's a bigger concern hidden amid the numbers of Exxon Mobil's earnings.

The company's worldwide oil production fell 10 percent, to just under 2.5 million barrels a day.

### [Iran Doubles Oil Stored in Tankers, Bolstering Rates](#)

Bloomberg) -- Iran, OPEC's second-largest oil producer, more than doubled the amount stored in tankers idling in the Persian Gulf, sending ship prices higher as demand for some of its crude fell, people familiar with the situation said.

The 10 tankers hold at least 20 million barrels of oil, equal to about 5 days of the country's output, said the people, who asked not to be identified because the information isn't public. Rates for tankers have more than tripled since April 8, based on data from the Baltic Exchange and ship-fuel prices.

### [Oil Price May Go Up to \\$250, Warn Experts](#)

Crude prices continue to baffle analysts and pundits. With the \$100-era a well established fact in our daily life, there is now a growing chatter within the energy fraternity that \$200 a barrel may not be a far fetched idea altogether. Is another global oil shock now gathering pace?

With limited additional supplies, alternative fuel still some decades away and demand far from collapsing, Deutsche Bank is pointing to a "huge risk" that oil prices would continue to rise in the near to mid-term.

### [Iran's yen for the euro](#)

Iran, the world's fourth largest oil producer, has reportedly shifted from the US dollar to euro and yen as currencies in which it will trade its crude produce. This is seen as a major blow to the US dollar as a reserve currency.

Iran's move may be determined partly because of its ongoing political stand-off with the US. However, that need not be the only consideration to have prompted Iran to shift to the euro and yen. Many oil exporting nations, as indeed other emerging economies accumulating dollar reserves, have been worrying about the structural weaknesses in the US economy and the prospect of the dollar's long-term decline.

### [Gulf States May End Dollar Pegs, Kuwait Minister Says](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Gulf states are considering dropping their pegs to the dollar after the U.S. currency's decline stoked inflation across the region, Kuwaiti Finance Minister Mustafa al-Shimali said.

``Yes, there are some" Gulf Cooperation Council states considering dropping their pegs to the dollar, which has fallen 13 percent against the euro in the last 12 months, al-Shimali said in an interview in Kuwait late yesterday without naming the countries. ``Some countries will do what we are doing."

### [Bolivia takes over four energy companies](#)

LA PAZ (Reuters) - Bolivia will pay \$43 million to take controlling stakes in four energy companies, one through an agreement with Spanish oil company Repsol and others through state decrees, the government said on Thursday. Bolivia's state energy company YPF signed a deal with Repsol, agreeing to pay \$6.3 million to acquire enough shares to give it a majority stake in Repsol's Andina, one of Bolivia's biggest energy companies.

The announcement came exactly two years after leftist President Evo Morales launched his nationalization of Bolivia's energy industry in a bid to increase government income from the country's rich natural gas fields.

### [Senators ready dueling energy plans](#)

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Democrats and Republican lawmakers in the U.S. Senate on Thursday set the stage for a divisive energy policy debate with two dueling party-line bills to combat high gasoline prices.

With Senate Democrats promising to unveil a new proposal to tame record-high U.S. pump prices averaging \$3.60 a gallon on Friday, Republicans rolled out their proposal that would open a small portion of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling, among other things.



### [Do you need to stock up the bunker?](#)

Then of course there are natural disasters, something that the US is more used to than the UK, which is largely immune from the more serious earthquakes and hurricanes.

And yet last year's floods in Gloucestershire left 140,000 homes without running water for nearly two weeks.

A major global economic crisis or a dramatic oil shortage are also on Biggs's mind.

If you want to make it through the breakdown, he says, you should build a "safe haven" which is "self-sufficient and capable of growing some kind of food".

### [Natural born survivors](#)

Rising oil prices, global food shortages and the economic crisis are proof for many survivalists that society is on the brink of meltdown. But are their predictions all gloom and doom - or a chance to create new communities?

### [Coal Use Set to Increase in the Global Energy Mix](#)

A combination of strong demand, record oil and gas prices, concerns over energy security and a reluctance to recommit to nuclear energy, has seen a renaissance of coal in the European energy mix. This is a trend closely mirrored in the US and Asia. However, while coal might help to fill growing energy security gaps, it raises some profound environmental questions.

No less than 50 coal-fired plants have been slated for construction over the next five years in the EU alone, while India and China are currently constructing a new coal-fired plant every week. Coal is also continuing to gather momentum in the US; 150 proposals for coal-fired plants were put forward in 2007, most of which are likely to gain permits.

### [Jeremy Leggett: Dawn of an energy famine](#)

This week the shape of the global energy crisis came into its sharpest focus yet. The world needs renewable energy fast, but as BP and Shell announced record profits, they also demonstrated that they are in essence retreating from renewables, perhaps with the exception of biofuels. They intend to focus their record billions on expanding production of what remains of traditional oil and gas, plus tar sands and liquid fuels from coal - ruinous in their effect on the climate.

## [Oxygen depletion threatens ocean habitats: study](#)

WASHINGTON (AFP) - Oxygen-depleted regions of tropical oceans are expanding, restricting habitats for fish and other marine life, an international team of scientists said in a study published Thursday.

The researchers found that oxygen levels at 300 to 700 meters (985 to 2,300 feet) have declined significantly over the past five decades.

"The ecological impacts of this increase could have substantial biological and economical consequences," a summary of the study said.



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