



## POLL: Can We Buildout Both Renewable Energy AND Attain Economic Growth?

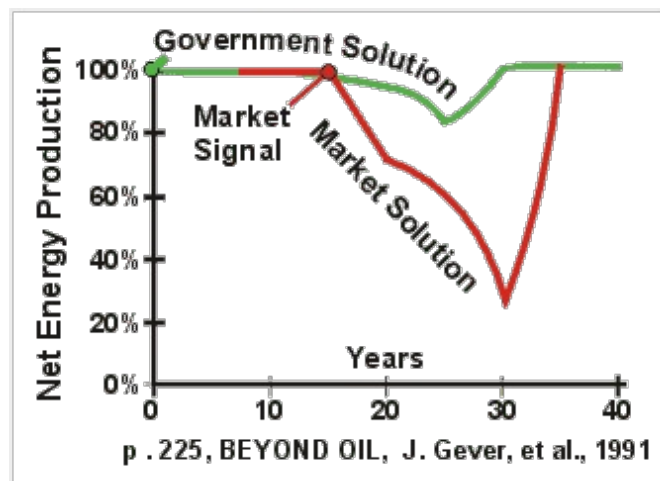
Posted by [Nate Hagens](#) on January 29, 2009 - 11:07am

Topic: [Environment/Sustainability](#)

Tags: [economic growth](#), [original](#), [poll](#), [renewable energy](#) [[list all tags](#)]

We are trying to do everything.

Save the banks, save the automakers, build out a smart grid, create jobs, yet not 'be held hostage to dwindling resources'. Can this be accomplished? We need energy to do work. We need cheap energy to have growth for this many people and for those recently joining the global stage. We need growth (or at least the perception of it) to have debt in order to finance future industry, whether the industry is basic goods or more discretionary pursuits. But via receding horizons (depletion outpacing technology), energy costs will outpace energy revenues (in aggregate, declining [energy surplus](#)), and a compressed time horizon will require prioritization.



(From: *Beyond Oil: the Threat to Food and Fuel in the Coming Decades*; John Gever et al.; p. 225)

Though dated, the above graphic shows (green) starting early to solve the problem of transition to a world of less liquid fuel and (red) waiting until the 'market signal' (aka last moment) - the net energy available to society (due to continued energy expenditures on 'un-economic growth') passes through a period of perilous scarcity. In Matt Simmons [latest presentation](#)(pdf), he suggests the need for up to \$100 trillion to upgrade the rust and aging energy delivery infrastructure - this is 2 orders of magnitude larger than the \$850 billion stimulus package voted on last night, and triple the total global stock market capitalization.

Cutler Cleveland at Boston U. kindly scanned the entire 'Beyond Oil' book at the above link which is an excellent introduction to the energy choices we face -(particularly Chapter 7.)

## Can We Buildout Renewable Energy Infrastructure and Attain Economic Growth at Same Time?

- 1) Yes, we have enough cheap oil and gas and materials left, that we can continue running the current system while building out renewable energy infrastructure. Yes we can (and will).
- 2) Yes we have the energy and resources to do it, but why should we? It would just perpetuate the complexity and dependency society has on superficial pursuits. Best to change the 'ends' as soon as possible - save the energy for later.
- 3) Yes, but only if we curtail non-essential industry and focus on 'smart-growth' -we then have enough energy gain and materials to continue 'growing' though growth will be different than in the past.
- 4) No, we cannot have growth AND scale renewable infrastructure without creating greater problems and shortfalls in the future. So to effectively build out 'sustainable' energy, we must give up growth as our goal.
- 5) No, not only can't we have growth, but we can't scale renewable infrastructure for 6+ billion in time to avert population reductions, war, famine, etc.
- 6) Other. Some option not generally reflected above.

Please vote in the [. POLL .](#) and if you like, cite your choice, and provide logic (and or links and graphs) as to why, in the open thread below.

*(Note: the full poll choices are listed above but a temporary tech glitch (character limit)precludes me from listing the entire text.)*



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