



## DrumBeat: February 19, 2009

Posted by [Leanan](#) on February 19, 2009 - 9:29am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

### [Oil-Price Decline Provides Diplomatic Opening to Iran](#)

Last fall, before the world economy had fallen completely out of bed, the International Monetary Fund estimated that oil prices would have to stay at \$90 a barrel for Iran to make enough money to balance its books.

Now that the slump in global economic activity has driven oil prices to around \$36 a barrel, Iran, which derives 85% of government revenue from oil exports, figures to be awash in its own Washington-like red ink in the coming year. Throw in the fact that there's no reason to think the oil slump will end soon, and knowledge that energy-industry experts say Iran already has been failing to make the long-term technology investments needed to keep its oil fields producing robustly, and you suddenly have an interesting backdrop for U.S. President Barack Obama's "let's talk" overture to Tehran.

### [Big Oil says not to blame for rising pump prices](#)

NEW YORK, Feb 19 (Reuters) - The American Petroleum Institute -- the country's main lobbying group for the U.S. oil industry -- defended U.S. energy companies on Thursday against criticism that lower refining activity is pushing gasoline prices higher for recession-wary drivers.

"We've heard people say, 'Oh, the refiners are trying to manipulate the prices,' but it just isn't true," API Chief Economist John Felmy told reporters on a conference call.

API figures show that U.S. refiners made a record amount of gasoline in January, and U.S. gasoline imports also rose in the month, even after government data showed demand for gasoline fell in 2008 for the first time since 1991.

### [Precision Drilling Slumps in Toronto After Postponing Debt Sale](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Precision Drilling Trust fell to a 13-year low in Toronto after Canada's largest oil and gas driller postponed a bond sale, citing weak demand.

### [Canadian Natural Resources likely to cut spending this year](#)

CALGARY, Alberta -- Canadian Natural Resources Ltd. will likely cut spending this year from an already conservative budget as oil and gas prices stay mired below its expectations, a top executive said on Thursday.

Canadian Natural, the country's No. 2 independent oil explorer, will remove money earmarked for its natural gas operations if it does make cuts, as the outlook for prices for the fuel remains negative, Vice-Chairman John Langille said.

### [ANALYSIS/High hopes, concerns over Sakhalin-2](#)

The start of natural gas production by the Sakhalin-2 project off Sakhalin, Russia, brings high expectations that Japan will be able to diversify its energy sources, but many remain concerned about the risks of doing business with Russia.

### [Exxon, Chevron Denied Hearing Over Canada Research Spending](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Exxon Mobil Corp., Chevron Corp. and others involved in offshore oil production in eastern Canada lost a bid for a hearing before the country's top court challenging a 2004 order requiring them to spend more on research.

Canada's Supreme Court today denied the companies' request appealing the order, which they say will cost millions of dollars. The court gave no reason for its decision.

### [BP to pay nearly \\$180 million over Texas refinery](#)

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - BP Products North America Inc, a unit of BP Plc, has agreed to spend or pay nearly \$180 million to resolve clear air law violations at its refinery in Texas City, Texas, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Justice department said on Thursday.

### [Satellite photos used to detect oil seeps](#)

US scientists said they have discovered they can use satellite images to detect oil seeping from oilfields beneath the seafloor of the Gulf of Mexico.

### [Kyrgyzstan parliament votes to close key U.S. air base](#)

BISHKEK, Kyrgyzstan (AP) — Kyrgyzstan's parliament voted Thursday to close a key U.S. air base in the country — a move that could hamper President Barack Obama's

efforts to increase the number of U.S. forces in Afghanistan.

### [The Peak Oil Crisis: Parsing the Numbers](#)

Someday peak oil will be about high gas prices and lines at the pumps, but for the time being it is mostly about numbers - lots and lots of numbers.

There are numbers for prices, numbers for oil reserves, numbers for oil demand, numbers for oil supply, numbers for oil depletion and most importantly numbers for the rates of change for all these numbers. For most people, all the thousands and thousands of numbers that pertain to the supply, demand, and costs for petroleum products are of absolutely no concern. The only thing that matters is the cost of a gallon of gas or perhaps heating oil which recently have been highly affordable.

Those who fondly believe that our economic troubles will be ending soon and that economic growth will return any day now might contemplate what the Director of The International Energy Agency said earlier this week. His message is a simple one: investment in new oil production has fallen so low that whenever an economic recovery occurs, the oil to support the recovery is unlikely to be there. Supplies will be inadequate and prices will rise much as they did last summer choking off the recovery. In the words of the headline writers "Oil crunch in 2010".

### [U.S., Canada to agree on energy pact: White House](#)

OTTAWA - The United States and Canada will announce an agreement on Thursday to work together on energy technology that is environmentally friendly, including capturing and storing the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide, a White House official said.

"We are announcing an agreement to work together on clean energy technology," the official said.

"It will include elements like carbon capture and sequestration and the smart grid."

### [Brazil in deal to sell oil to China, seeks loan](#)

BRASILIA (Reuters) - Brazil reached a deal on Thursday to supply China with 100,000 to 160,000 barrels of oil per day at market prices, as the Asian country made its latest move to secure resources to fuel economic growth.

### [Financial Crisis May be Creating the Best Investment Opportunities of our Lifetime, Money Morning Expert Says](#)

Longer-term, the world won't realize that global demand is rising all along - despite

what the statistics say - until the economic recovery stimulates oil demand again. Probably no more than five years from now. Eventually, the fundamentals of declining production, growing demand, and thin inventories will overwhelm today's low prices. Which is why I think oil will be back at \$212 dollars a barrel ... a figure that's downright conservative compared to Matthew Simmons [peak oil pundit and author of "Twilight in the Desert: The Coming Saudi Oil Shock and the World Economy"], who's on record predicting that oil prices will reach \$500 a barrel.

### [BP Shut Flow Line After Spill Yesterday in Prudhoe Bay, Alaska](#)

(Bloomberg) -- BP Plc, Europe's second-largest oil company by market value, shut a flow line and 11 wells after a release of natural gas, crude oil and water yesterday, according to a regulatory filing.

"Production will be rerouted and is expected to resume tonight," the filing showed yesterday. The size of the spill was not stated, and the cause of the release is under investigation, according to the report.

### [EDF Wins First Approval for Constellation Nuclear Buy](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Electricite de France SA won initial U.S. approval for its \$4.5 billion purchase of half of Constellation Energy Group Inc.'s nuclear-power business, in a bid to enter the U.S. electricity market.

### [Biofuel rocket engine gets test run: Biofuel is denser than traditional rocket fuel so more fits inside the tank](#)

The U.S. aerospace industry is officially onboard the biofuel bandwagon, with the test fire of a small rocket engine that burns commercially available biodiesel.

California-based Flometrics did the honors and discovered the Rocketdyne LR-101 engine produced nearly the same amount of thrust burning biodiesel as it did chugging through a kerosene-based conventional rocket fuel.

### [Green wheel turns pedal bike into electric hog](#)

The next time you change a bike tire, think about upgrading your power as well. Scientists at MIT are testing a new power generation, storage and propulsion system known as the GreenWheel that will turn any pedal bicycle into an electric hog.

"Just take the wheel off, put a GreenWheel equipped wheel on in its place, plug it in and it should work just fine," said Ryan Chin, one of the GreenWheel designers. "The whole thing has been designed so all the parts except the throttle are enclosed in the wheel."

### [Report examines links between water and energy](#)

A new study using research from Cambridge Energy Research Associates examines such topics as the strategic significance of water, water's role in energy production, and how energy is used in providing water.

The report is titled "Thirsty Energy: Water and Energy in the 21st Century," and it is the product of a collaboration between the World Economic Forum and Cambridge Energy Research Associates, an IHS Inc. company also known as CERA.

One report finding: "Energy's share of water is likely to be squeezed in the future in many parts of the world."

### [Stuck in a Multi-Year Oil Demand Downturn?](#)

Increasingly the economists and politicians discussing the current economic downturn are referencing the early 1980s recession, or in some cases the 1973-74 recession. Both of these recessions were hard and lasted about 16 months, whereas the current recession is only 13 months old, but is already a challenging one. There has also been talk by economists and stock market seers about how the current recession could morph into the next Great Depression. Unfortunately, a Great Depression comparison provides little help for investors trying to understand how energy markets might be affected. The International Energy Agency (IEA) in its recent oil demand forecasts has been commenting that the back-to-back declines of 2008 and 2009 would mark the first time for that to occur since 1982-1983, some 25 years ago.

### [Iraq was the first 'resource war' of the century](#)

The Iraq war was just the first of this century's "resource wars", in which powerful countries use force to secure valuable commodities for themselves, according to the UK government's former chief scientific adviser.

Sir David King predicted that with human population growing, natural resources dwindling and seas rising because of climate change, the squeeze on the planet would lead to more conflict.

### [Mexico hopes to offset oil output drop](#)

Faced with declining oil production at its most reliable source, officials at Mexico's state oil company PEMEX are hopeful that production at new fields both on and offshore -- bolstered by increased investment -- will keep the sector from collapse.

Mexico is now the third-largest supplier of oil to the United States, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration's latest figures, a drop from No. 2.

The longtime backbone of Mexican energy -- the Cantarell oil field -- is nearly at the end of its lifespan, according to PEMEX experts, who point to successive years of decreased production.

### [Oil Service Firms Prepare Bids for Mexico Chicontepec Work](#)

Oil services companies are homing in this week on a massive drilling contract in Mexico, one of the few countries to boost oil investment this year despite the price collapse.

With drilling activity plummeting in traditional markets such as the U.S. and Canada, industry giants such as Schlumberger, Halliburton and Baker Hughes are looking to expand in Mexico.

State oil monopoly Petroleos Mexicanos is spending heavily to halt a collapse in production that threatens to erase the country's exports in less than seven years.

### [Global crisis hits Mozambique Mozal aluminium project](#)

MAPUTO (Reuters) - Mozambique's \$2.5 billion Mozal aluminium smelter reported a loss of \$115 million for the 2008 financial year and will have to cut staff due to the economic slowdown, a central bank document showed on Wednesday.

A fall in the price of aluminium hit the company's profits, and Mozal's power supply was cut by 10 percent after an energy crisis hit neighbouring South Africa.

### [IMF agrees \\$120 million for struggling Tajikistan](#)

An impoverished Central Asian state with a population of 7.5 million and a long border with volatile Afghanistan, Tajikistan is currently caught in a massive energy crisis.

The government has implemented an energy rationing scheme, leaving the country with severe energy shortages.

### [Foreign oil tanker arrested in Sekondi ... on orders of High Court](#)

REPORTS REACHING The Chronicle from Takoradi in the Western Region suggest that a large oil tanker belonging to a foreign shipping Company, Tsakos Shipping and Trading Limited, has been detained for non-compliance of a Ghanaian court's order to pay consultancy fees due a Ghanaian company, Inter-Afrique Holdings Ltd.

...Some staff of the VRA at Aboadze have raised serious concern about a possible shortage of fuel to power the Aboadze thermal plant if this matter is not quickly resolved.

### [Auto bailout tab could top \\$130 billion](#)

GM and Chrysler say they need \$21.6 billion more in loans. But that won't be enough to save Detroit. Here's a rundown of all the auto bailout proposals.

### [Food security](#) (audio)

There are many who are extremely concerned by the threat posed to agriculture by climate change and a world running low on fossil fuels. But when Patrick Holden first started to consider the implications of trying to run his organic farm without fuel or even electricity, he became so alarmed he re-thought his entire philosophical approach to organic farming.

He explains why we need to fundamentally change the way we produce our food and how this shift can be achieved.

### [Egyptian Workers Strike against Fertilizer Export to Israel](#)

In an unprecedented action, the first following the recent Israeli war on Gaza, workers of the Egyptian Fertilizers Company in Suez protested on Saturday, 7 February against the export of fertilizers to Israel.

### [Wholesale prices higher than expected](#)

NEW YORK (CNNMoney.com) -- The government's measurement of wholesale inflation rose more than expected in January, due largely to rising energy prices.

### [Family of 5 weathers economy with 7 housemates](#)

Chris and Georgia Frankel have three children. But they've invited seven other people who are facing financial challenges to live with them. Rent is optional. "People were there for us and helped us when we needed it," Chris Frankel said. "We wanted to do the same."

### [The right way for L.A. to go solar](#)

This basic ideal of the [Los Angeles Department of Water and Power] being a solar utility -- that piece of the total solar package, which is what we're talking about this morning, which is the piece on the ballot -- was a thought that I expressed in my book years ago. I don't have to tell this crowd about global warming and AB 32 and the 20% renewable standard; I mean, we all are dedicated -- and your editorials have recognized -- we're dedicated to moving off of fossil fuels onto renewable energy.

So the issue is, is this a cost-effective, sensible way of doing it? And if you just take a broad view of things, what renewable energy do we have that we can harness? Well, here in Los Angeles, by God we have the sun....

### [Oklahoma nuclear power bill advances in committee](#)

OKLAHOMA CITY - Oklahoma lawmakers signaled their interest to go nuclear, approving legislation that would streamline the state's regulatory process and provide new incentives to build a nuclear power plant.

### [PBMR to run out of cash in 2010](#)

Pebble Bed Modular Reactor (PBMR) will run out of money in about a year and must adapt its novel nuclear technology to make itself commercially viable.

Eskom and the Industrial Development Corporation hold an 85 percent stake in the joint venture, with the remainder held by US-based Westinghouse.

### [Oilsands scare ads tough to counter](#)

If oilsands politics were football, the world would get a penalty for piling on. Demonstrators scale a bridge in Ottawa. Ads show images of Canada dripping black goo on the United States. Even a top NASA official, James Hansen, says the oilsands shouldn't be mined.

All this draws about 1,000 times the usual publicity because President Barack Obama is in Canada today, trailing the world's most carbon-intensive media circus.

But here in Alberta, the government is strangely perky even as the fusillade grows in volume and impact.

### [INTERVIEW - NASA's Hansen concerned about Canada's oil sands](#)

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Canada's oil sands are an environmental "wild card,"



NASA's James Hansen said in an interview before President Barack Obama's trip to Ottawa, where energy and climate change will be on the agenda.

As director of the U.S. space agency's Goddard Institute for Space Studies in New York City, with a focus on climate change, Hansen has long opposed the burning of oil, gas and coal for their contribution to global warming.

And he really objects to the burning of fuels gleaned from tar shale and tar sands in western Canada.

### [Oil demand may begin to peak soon: report](#)

LONDON (Reuters) - World oil demand could begin to peak over the next decade as worries over security of supply, extreme price swings and climate change force a move towards other forms of energy, consultancy Arthur D. Little said.

In a report entitled "The Beginning of the End for Oil?," the consultancy's Peter Hughes suggests the extraordinary price moves over the last year, environmental pressures and concerns that most of the world's oil is imported from volatile regions has concentrated minds in the big consuming countries.

Oil hit an all-time high of almost \$150 per barrel last July but has since tumbled more than 70 percent to around \$40.

"The penny has dropped. To varying degrees, governments across the globe are acknowledging publicly, many for the first time, that decreasing reliance on imported oil -- and quickly -- is becoming an energy policy imperative," the report said.

### [Oil price to limit output rise in the Americas](#)

CALGARY, Alberta (Reuters) - Oil production in the Americas is expected to climb only slightly this year with previous outlooks for Canada and Brazil looking too rosy after a collapse in crude prices turned an industry boom to bust.

### [Not road tripping: Americans drive fewer miles - again](#)

WASHINGTON (Reuters) -- Americans drove fewer miles in December for the 14th month in a row, but the decline was not as steep as in previous months thanks to cheaper gasoline prices that encouraged additional travel in some states, the U.S. Transportation Department said Thursday.

### [Low prices may stir U.S. gasoline demand recovery](#)

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Low gasoline prices are beginning to entice Americans to take to the roads again and may nurture a nascent rebound in gasoline demand after a year of high pump prices and the slumping economy throttled consumption.

U.S. gasoline demand rose by 0.1 percent in the four weeks ending February 6, according to government data. That marked the first four-week increase since last spring, when surging prices and a souring economy began to take a toll on road travel.

### [China moves to snap up bargain-basement oil](#)

HONG KONG - China accelerated plans yesterday to secure its energy future while oil prices are cheap, with Beijing moving to triple the country's stockpile of refined oil products over the next three years.

The latest piece of Beijing's strategy, reported by the China Daily News, aimed at getting its energy infrastructure in order will see China establish three-million tons of oil product reserves this year, rising to 10 million tons by the end of 2011.

### [Chavez Plans 12% More Oil as Project Costs Rise, Credit Freezes](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Venezuela plans to boost oil output at least 12 percent in a joint venture with foreign investors that will cost more than twice what the government previously estimated, a confidential document shows.

The project would increase Venezuela's daily output of 3 million barrels a day by 400,000 barrels a day within seven years, according to the document, which was obtained by Bloomberg News. The project would cost \$18.4 billion, the report says, up from Energy and Oil Minister Rafael Ramirez's June estimate of \$8 billion.

...“It will be very tricky for companies, big or small, to get that level of funding,” said David Thomson, a Latin America energy analyst for Wood Mackenzie in Edinburgh. “Even if there wasn't a credit crunch on, raising \$10 billion to \$20 billion for Venezuela wouldn't be the easiest.”

### [Exxon to shut Singapore plants March-April -sources](#)

SINGAPORE (Reuters) - Exxon Mobil Corp will partially shut its Singapore mainland refinery and petrochemical units on Jurong Island from March to April for routine maintenance, industry sources said on Thursday.

The sources said the U.S. energy giant will close a few units in the 309,000 barrels per day (bpd) mainland refinery from early-March to mid-April. Details of the units were not immediately available.

### [Pertamina's Refinery Stays in Operation After Supply Disruption](#)

(Bloomberg) -- PT Pertamina, Indonesia's state oil company, kept its Balongan oil refinery in Java in operation by using existing oil stockpiles after a disruption to crude shipments, a company official said.

The company is repairing the so-called single point mooring facility, or the offshore loading point, Rukmi Hadihartini, processing director at the company, said in a mobile-phone text message today. The plant has a capacity of 125,000 barrels a day.

### [Ukraine's Naftogaz warns Gazprom of possible gas payment snags](#)

KIEV (RIA Novosti) - Ukraine's national energy company Naftogaz announced on Thursday it might face problems paying for natural gas supplied by Russia's Gazprom as debts of Ukrainian utility companies grow.

"The national joint stock company Naftogaz of Ukraine is giving notice of the possible deterioration of the situation with payments to Gazprom following a disastrous growth in utility companies' debts to its structures," Naftogaz said in a statement posted on its web site.

### [Ecuador expels second U.S. diplomat this month](#)

Economic troubles due to plummeting oil revenues and immigrants' remittances are starting to worry Ecuadoreans who lived through a crippling financial crisis in 1999 that left thousands without their bank deposits and jobs.

The United States is Ecuador's main trading partner and the destination for much of its oil and banana exports.

### [Iran Total to sign much-delayed gas deal](#)

TEHRAN, (AFP) – Iran and Total of France are to sign a much-delayed deal to develop a key natural gas field, a report said.

The Mehr news agency quoted National Iranian Oil Company managing director Seyfollah Jashnsaz as saying Wednesday that the five billion dollar deal to develop the phase 11 of the South Pars gas field located in the Gulf would be signed by March 20.

### [Sales of new cars, trucks continue to fall](#)

Sales of new cars and trucks this month are collapsing almost too fast to track.

The February sales pace through the first half of the month appears to be at an annualized rate of fewer than 9 million.

"Data collected from dealers suggests sub-9 million SAAR for February," says Jeff Schuster, forecasting chief for auto consultant J.D. Power and Associates. SAAR stands for seasonally adjusted annual rate, or total new vehicles sales if that month's pace held for a year.

That's well off January's 9.6 million pace, which had been considered about as bad as things could get. It was the first month with an annualized rate below 10 million since August 1982, says sales tracker Autodata. The last time consecutive months were that low was June-August 1982.

### [Propane Power](#)

If Jack Roush has anything to say about it, propane soon will be used for more than grilling hamburgers and hot dogs at the infield cookout.

After Sunday's Daytona 500 victory by Roush-Fenway NASCAR team driver Matt Kenseth, Roush was back at his headquarters outside Detroit this week to promote his company's new line of propane-fueled Ford trucks and vans.

A veteran of racing and the automotive industry, Roush loves the sound of a snarling gasoline-powered V-8 as much as the next guy – probably more. But Roush sees alternative fuels as a positive step in the struggling U.S. auto industry's journey out of the economic wilderness.

"We're getting ready for the upswing here," Roush said. "The automobile industry is going to survive. We're going to morph ourselves into a shape where we can have better market share for the things that we do than we've had in the past. And life's going to be good."

### [US nuclear plants must prepare for plane attacks](#)

WASHINGTON (AFP) – Firms building nuclear power stations will have to present designs that limit the possible effects of a large aircraft hitting the facility, the US nuclear energy watchdog said Wednesday.

The rules are designed to limit the impact of a potentially catastrophic September 11-style attack on reactors, according to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC).

### [Tokyo Electric Seeks Local Approval to Start Reactor](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Tokyo Electric Power Co. will ask the local government in Niigata prefecture today for authority to restart the world's biggest nuclear plant, which caught fire and leaked radiation in a 2007 earthquake.

### [Russia could spend \\$7 bln on Turkish nuclear plants](#)

YUZHNO-SAKHALINSK, Russia (Reuters) - Russia's energy minister said on Thursday that a state-backed consortium could spend up to \$7 billion on a project to build four nuclear reactors in Turkey, whose total cost is \$18-20 billion.

### [A Joint Statement of the U.S. Renewable Fuels Association and the Canadian Renewable Fuels Association on President Barack Obama's Visit with Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper](#)

As America and Canada look for ways to provide economic opportunity, reduce the impacts of climate change, and develop renewable energy sources, the role of biofuels in the energy plans of both nations is becoming increasingly important. Both nations are investing in alternatives to imported oil. For his part, President Obama is pushing for a comprehensive and ambitious plan to invest in alternative and renewable energy to diversify the North American fuel supply, address climate change, and create green manufacturing jobs and a new green economy. The biofuels industry has been in the forefront of creating green jobs for decades.

### [America's future wind web?](#)

MADISON, S.D. - Out across this wind-swept, wheat-growing state, Jeffrey Nelson sees a new crop rising – electricity from the world's largest wind-turbine farms sending electrons thousands of miles east to Chicago or Boston.

But it's a vision the South Dakota Wind Energy Association president says will never happen without something far larger, more controversial, and even more expensive: gigantic new high-voltage transmission lines.

### [Is Alternative Energy Dead?](#)

It's almost axiomatic to say that we all care about the effects of global warming (hi Mr. Gore!). Nobody wants to swim down 5th avenue. But it really wasn't until last year's phenomenal oil spike that people started talking about alternative energy with any kind of practical fervor – and that brought investment dollars.

Oh, how times have changed.

### [Stimulus to propel energy jobs](#)

Energy secretary says most utility construction projects slated for funding in the stimulus package are 'shovel-ready,' and could yield energy sector jobs soon.

### [Peak Oil: Facts At Your Fingertips](#)

The following may indicate some of the more important “names and numbers” in the complex issue of peak oil and its consequences. Besides that of oil production itself, one curve for which the numbers are significant is that of human population, since the interaction of those two curves will be momentous. Other vital sets of figures are those in the quest for alternative energy and those for post-oil survival.

### [Mean epithets are the new catchphrases](#)

A peaknik, according to our inventive media, is a person who believes the "peak oil" theory (that supplies of oil are running out and prices will grow prohibitively high and civilization will change dramatically). The word is an example of how ironic and derogatory terms become so widespread that they lose their ironic connotations.

### [Alaskan Coastal Erosion Doubles, Threatening Oil Exploration](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Coastal erosion doubled in parts of northern Alaska over a five-year period as sea ice retreated during global warming, threatening some land-based oil exploration.

Erosion rates along a 37-mile (60-kilometer) stretch of the Beaufort Sea coast were 13.6 meters (45 feet) a year in 2002 through 2007 compared with 6.8 meters a year from 1955 through 1979, researchers led by Benjamin Jones at the U.S. Geological Survey said in a study.

### [Obama and Canada's Controversial Oil Patch](#)

In the unlikely event that Barack Obama has some free time during his first trip to a foreign country as president on Thursday, he can take in Ottawa's first Tar Sands Film Festival.

It is just one of several events organized this week by environmentalists in Canada and the United States, as well as native groups, to encourage the new administration to put pressure on Canada over pollution from Alberta's huge oil-extraction projects.

### [Officials: Lubricant oil leaking off Calif. coast](#)

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. – A mixture of oil and water leaking Wednesday from an Exxon Mobil platform spread across a mile of ocean off the Southern California coast, federal and state officials said.

Initial reports indicated the leak on Platform Harmony came from a deck drainage tank where rainwater, lubricants and fluids drain into a sump, said Coast Guard spokeswoman Stephanie Young. She said the company reported the leak Monday and was still working Wednesday to stop the mixture from seeping into the Santa Barbara Channel.

### [WWF says whales leaving Sakhalin waters due to oil, gas projects](#)

PETROPAVLOVSK KAMCHATSKY (RIA Novosti) - Oil and natural gas development off the coast of Sakhalin Island in Russia's Far East could have forced endangered whales to leave their habitat in the area, a local WWF spokesperson said on Thursday.

The change in habitat by part of the grey whale population "was probably due to oil and gas projects in Sakhalin," Alexandra Filatkina said, citing a chief whale researcher in the Far Eastern branch of Russia's Academy of Sciences.

### [Monbiot: George Will's climate howlers](#)

I have put George Will forward not because his latest column on climate change has a hope of winning this prestigious award, but because it affords us a fascinating insight into how certain myths pass through the media unchallenged.

All these howlers are examples of stories that, for climate change deniers, are too good to check. They come up again and again on websites and in newspapers, which accept them without examination. Perhaps because George Will is one of the paper's star columnists, they have now found their way into the Washington Post, which prides itself on fact-checking.

### [Forests absorb 20 percent of fossil fuel emissions: study](#)

LONDON (Reuters) – Tropical trees have grown bigger over the past 40 years and now absorb 20 percent of fossil fuel emissions from the atmosphere, highlighting the need to preserve threatened forests, British researchers said Wednesday.

Using data collected from nearly 250,000 trees in the world's tropical forests over the past 40 years, their study found that tropical forests across the world remove 4.8 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions each year.



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