



## DrumBeat: June 21, 2009

Posted by [Leanan](#) on June 21, 2009 - 9:42am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

### [Cheer Up, It's Going to Get Worse](#)

Three years ago, David Fridley purchased two and a half acres of land in rural Sonoma County. He planted drought-resistant blue Zuni corn, fruit trees and basic vegetables while leaving a full acre of extant forest for firewood collection. Today, Fridley and several friends and family subsist almost entirely off this small plot of land, with the surplus going to public charity.

But Fridley is hardly a homegrown hippie who spends his leisure time gardening. He spent 12 years consulting for the oil industry in Asia. He is now a staff scientist at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and a fellow of the Post Carbon Institute in Sebastopol, where members discuss the problems inherent to fossil-fuel dependency.

Fridley has his doubts about renewable energies, and he has grave doubts about the future of crude oil. In fact, he believes to a certainty that society is literally running out of gas and that, perhaps within years, the trucks will stop rolling into Safeway and the only reliable food available will be that grown in our backyards.

### [Nigerian militants attack three Shell oil sites](#)

LAGOS (Reuters) - Nigeria's main militant group said on Sunday it had attacked three oil installations belonging to Royal Dutch Shell in the Niger Delta, widening a month-old offensive against Africa's biggest energy industry.

### [In Tehran, an eerie calm as death toll jumps to 17](#)

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — An eerie calm settled over the streets of Tehran Sunday as state media reported at least 10 more deaths in post-election unrest and said authorities arrested the daughter and four other relatives of ex-President Hashemi Rafsanjani, one of Iran's most powerful men.

### [Iraq May Issue \\$5 Billion in Bonds to Finance Power Projects](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Iraq, holder of the world's third- largest oil reserves, may sell about \$5 billion in bonds to finance infrastructure projects including construction of power plants and water-supply facilities, a government spokesman said.

### [Stimulus Funds Spent to Keep Sun Belt Cool](#)

CRAWFORDVILLE, Fla. — The federal government is spending \$5 billion in stimulus money to weatherize homes across the country. That is almost as much as it has spent on weatherization since the program was created in the 1970s to cut heating bills and conserve oil for low-income people.

But this year, there is a twist.

An unusually large share of the money will be spent not on keeping cold air out but on keeping cold air in. As a result of a political compromise with Sun Belt lawmakers last decade, the enormous expansion of the weatherization program will invoke a rarely used formula that will devote 31 percent of the money, nearly double the old share of 16 percent, to help states in hot climates, like Florida, save on air-conditioning.

### [Questions About a Desert Village](#)

Started in 2007, when property prices were at their peak, Hydra Village promised to transform a desert tract outside of Abu Dhabi into a lush “eco-village” of lakes, pools and 2,500 villas. It was to be complete by the end of this year; Mr. Fahim now says the project will be finished by 2011.

But with the development hardly begun, Hydra Village investors, most of whom are foreigners living in this oil-rich emirate, are in no mood for promises. Instead, they have started demanding that Mr. Fahim prove he has adequate funds to follow through on this project. The protest has become a public embarrassment for the publicity-shy Nahyan family, which rules the United Arab Emirates.

### [San Francisco to Toughen a Strict Recycling Law](#)

BERKELEY, Calif. — San Francisco, which already boasts one of the most aggressive recycling programs in the country, has raised the ante, vowing to levy fines of up to \$1,000 on those unwilling to separate their Kung Pao chicken leftovers from their newspapers.

### [Dodge Roadster: ‘Least Green’ Car in Britain](#)

An 8-liter Dodge sports car is the “least green” automobile for sale in Britain, according to the Environmental Transport Association, a nonprofit group that lobbies for

sustainable travel and finances itself by selling insurance.

Driving the Dodge SRT-10 roadster, known as a Viper in the United States, for a year would emit the same amount of carbon dioxide as is absorbed by an acre of oak trees, the association said.

### [What It's Like To Own A Tesla Roadster](#)

Tesla's Roadster is an undeniably cool looking car, but it might be better to browse rather than buy.

Here's an excerpt of a funny review of the Roadster that was posted anonymously to the Tesla Motor Club message board. If you're ever lucky enough to own a Roadster, this is what you're in for...

### [Five More Electric Cars from Mitsubishi](#)

Mitsubishi announced earlier this month that its i-MiEV electric car would cost \$45,660, and Wheels readers raised their eyebrows at the high price for the tiny car. Even with a \$14,000 credit from the Japanese government, the car would be expensive for what it is — a small city car with a battery range of 75 to 100 miles.

“These companies better get real about their prices, unless they are including a lifetime supply of batteries,” wrote Dick.

### [A Move to Put the Union Label on Solar Power Plants](#)

SACRAMENTO — When a company called Ausra filed plans for a big solar power plant in California, it was deluged with demands from a union group that it study the effect on creatures like the short-nosed kangaroo rat and the ferruginous hawk.

By contrast, when a competitor, BrightSource Energy, filed plans for an even bigger solar plant that would affect the imperiled desert tortoise, the same union group, California Unions for Reliable Energy, raised no complaint. Instead, it urged regulators to approve the project as quickly as possible.

One big difference between the projects? Ausra had rejected demands that it use only union workers to build its solar farm, while BrightSource pledged to hire labor-friendly contractors.

### [Hot tub technology](#)

Forget expensive high-tech silver bullets such as nuclear fusion and carbon capture and storage; the solution to climate change lies in the humble electric immersion heater that sits in the hot water tank under your stairs. That's the view of Dr Mark Barrett, senior researcher at the UCL Energy Institute, who will present his analysis at a meeting in the House of Commons on 18 June.

A tank with an immersion heater may be just an oversized kettle, but there are thought to be around 19m in Britain's homes, which collectively have the capacity to store huge amounts of energy as hot water. And this could be key to achieving an almost wholly renewable electricity supply.

### [Europe Looks to Africa for Solar Power](#)

NEW YORK — The European project known as Desertec is nothing if not ambitious.

It aims to harvest the sun's energy — using a method known as concentrating solar power, or C.S.P. — from the vast North African desert and deliver it as electricity, via high-voltage transmission lines, to markets in Europe. Eventually, its backers say, it could satisfy as much as 15 percent of the European Union's power needs.

### [Disaster Request for a Drought-Hit County in California](#)

LOS ANGELES — Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger made an unusual request Friday, asking President Obama to declare Fresno County a federal disaster area because of a three-year drought that is straining California's agricultural industry and worsening unemployment in the hard-hit Central Valley.

### [Destroying Levees in a State Usually Clamoring for Them](#)

In the 1960s, a group of businessmen bought 16,000 acres of swampy bottomland along the Ouachita River in northern Louisiana and built miles of levee around it. They bulldozed its oak and cypress trees and, when the land dried out, turned it into a soybean farm.

Now two brothers who grew up nearby are undoing all that work. In what experts are calling the biggest levee-busting operation ever in North America, the brothers plan to return the muddy river to its ancient floodplain, coaxing back plants and animals that flourished there when President Thomas Jefferson first had the land surveyed in 1804.

### [A show of faith: Green Hill Urban Farm reimagines agriculture](#)

Ducklings quack and mutter, picking through the dirt for slugs and weed seeds. In a

thicket of cerulean love-in-a-mist, bumblebees hum a slow bass line against the staccato cries of the chickadees flitting from branch to branch amid the apple trees. Then THWACK! An arrow hits a low bridge spanning a drainage ditch, momentarily silencing the birds and sending splinters flying.

The intended target—a groundhog fattened by fresh farm produce—leaps, twists, then flies back to his burrow as fast as his stubby legs can carry him.

### [Saying No to Soy](#)

The expansion of the soy industry in Paraguay has occurred in tandem with the violent oppression of small farmers and indigenous communities. Farmers have been bullied into growing soy with pesticides, at the expense of their food crops, health, and subsequently their farms. Farmers who live next to the soy fields have been driven away by the chemicals, which kill their crops and animals and cause illnesses. Since the first soy boom, almost 100,000 small farmers have been evicted from their homes and fields. Countless indigenous communities have been forced to relocate. Mechanized production reorganized labor relations, as those who stayed to work in the soy fields were replaced by tractors and combines. Entire communities fled to the cities to be street vendors and live in the exploding semi-urban slums around large cities. Farmers who refuse to leave their land are targeted by hired security forces, employed by the surrounding soy growers, in hope that they will eventually sell. A simultaneous campaign of “criminalization” has allowed the soy industry to use the state security and judicial apparatus to remove and punish resistant farmers. More than a hundred campesino leaders have been assassinated, and more than two thousand others have faced trumped-up charges for their resistance to the intrusion of agribusiness.

### [Did Sewage Sludge Lace the White House Veggie Garden With Lead?](#)

In March, Michelle Obama delighted locavores when she planted an “organic” vegetable garden on the White House's South Lawn. For years, Alice Waters, Michael Pollan, and other sustainable food activists had been pushing the idea as a way to reseed interest in do-it-yourself agriculture. Less than two months later, the National Park Service disclosed that the garden's soil was contaminated with toxic lead, and the plot's educational value took on a new flavor as the New York Times and other papers discussed how to make urban backyards that are laced with old lead-based paint safe for growing kale and cauliflower. But those stories might have fingered the wrong culprit.

### [Fertilizer Divide: Too Much, Not Enough](#)

For several years, The Times has been focusing on “the climate divide.” This is the glaring gap between nations like the United States, with huge energy appetites and vast resulting emissions of greenhouse gases, and those like the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, where a lack of energy options comes with high environmental and social costs (deforestation, deaths from lung ailments caused by cooking on wood or dung).

Now a new analysis of agriculture patterns in three parts of the world where corn is grown shows that there is also a glaring “fertilizer divide.” The authors write that overuse of fertilizer, particularly in China, where chemical fertilizers are heavily subsidized, is generating large amounts of air pollution, including the greenhouse gas nitrous oxide, and big water pollution problems. Among other findings, the authors said that fertilizer use on corn in northern China could be cut in half with no loss of production.

### [Green toilet wins city approval](#)

It took more than four years of negotiations and construction, but this month an Austin Water Utility inspector gave final clearance to a glorified outhouse that is on the vanguard of down-and-dirty environmentalism.

Known as a composting toilet, the East Austin commode relies on the alchemy wrought by bacteria to transform human waste into a rich trove of soil. Specialists in so-called humanure have hailed the approval of the toilet as a watershed moment for common-sense environmentalism.

### [From the Ashes of '69, a River Reborn](#)

CLEVELAND — The first time Gene Roberts fell into the Cuyahoga River, he worried he might die. The year was 1963, and the river was still an open sewer for industrial waste. Walking home, Mr. Roberts smelled so bad that his friends ran to stay upwind of him.

Recently, Mr. Roberts returned to the river carrying his fly-fishing rod. In 20 minutes, he caught six smallmouth bass. “It’s a miracle,” said Mr. Roberts, 58. “The river has come back to life.”

### [A Green Coalition Gathers Strength in Europe](#)

BRUSSELS — One of the real victors in this month’s elections for the European Parliament is a 64-year-old former radical, an ebullient Franco-German who has turned his efforts to transform society from revolution to ecology.

### [‘Plan B’: less climate action than we need](#)

If the best climate scientists are frightened, we should be too. And we should be appalled and angry at the big corporate polluters and pro-business governments who continue to wreck the planet for profit.



## [Australian Emissions Trading Plan in Trouble](#)

NEWCASTLE, AUSTRALIA — On the windswept streets of Newcastle, the world's largest coal port and a hub of Australian heavy industry, people get nervous when asked to give their opinions on climate change.

Australia is the world's largest exporter of coal, which pumps billions of dollars into the economy, supplies more than 80 percent of the nation's electricity and keeps tens of thousands of people in their jobs — particularly in and around Newcastle. But the carbon dioxide produced from burning coal is also a major contributor to climate change, a problem the center-left Labor government has vowed to address.

## [The Coming Oil Crisis](#)

Rubin's argument is powerful. There's no denying that the international economy has become critically dependent on oil as its main source for energy. Yet, like other believers in the "peak oil" theory, he falls into the trap of underestimating society's capacity to meet future fuel challenges through innovation and conservation. The story of energy over the past century has been one of breakthroughs, not retreat—so although the energy problems we face today should be a cause for concern, global integration will continue to deepen and the world is not likely to get smaller any time soon.

## [Greens told no alternative to fossil fuels](#)

LISTEN to ministers and green campaigners and you would think that we are on a happy path to greener energy, with renewable sources of power freeing us from reliance on fossil fuels.

It is a pipe dream, according to a leader of Saudi Arabia's oil industry. Abdallah Jum'ah, who stepped down last year as chief executive of Saudi Aram-co, the state-owned oil company, said objective assessment of the world's energy needs showed renewable resources would provide only a minute share of what was required. Oil, gas and coal would remain the fuels of choice - and there was plenty of oil left, he told the Royal Academy of Engineering last week.

## [Brown demands emergency plan to stop oil wrecking recovery](#)

Gordon Brown has ordered top ministers at the Treasury and Department of Business to draw up plans to cope with rising oil prices and a lending drought for UK companies, amid fears that the nation's economic recovery risks being derailed.

Brown is seeking an international agreement to tackle the rising cost of crude, which rose to almost \$72 a barrel on Friday.

### [Oil's 'High Wave' Shows Rally Is Fading: Technical Analysis](#)

(Bloomberg) -- The two-month rally in crude oil is threatened by the "high wave" configuration formed by prices yesterday, according to FuturesTechs.com Ltd.

### [Oil rush: Scramble for Iraq's wealth](#)

Critics said the war was all about the nation's lucrative fuel industry. Are they now being proved right?

### [Boehner Urges Obama to Push for Block on Gasoline Sales to Iran](#)

(Bloomberg) -- House Republican Leader John Boehner called on President Barack Obama to push for an embargo of gasoline sales to Iran and take "a harder position" on that country's suppression of political dissent.

U.S. leadership in organizing an international "block" on sales of "refined oil products" to Iran would "have an immediate impact on this regime's horrible record" of not "dealing with their people in a fair and open way" as it tries to curb protests against the vote that re-elected President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Boehner said.

### [The Commodity Conundrum: The Hidden Parameter in Interest Rates](#)

According to the prevailing theory the Market price of a mineral is its marginal cost of extraction: the cost of extraction of the most expensive unit that find its way on the Market.

Reminder: the Marginal Cost of Extraction does not include fixed cost (i.e. exploration cost, cost of an offshore platform, etc...).

If that was true then the marginal cost of extraction would have risen as much as \$140!

In order to account for that unexpected behaviour people have invoked the concept of peak oil or the possibility that minerals would behave like stocks and would discount some future value, without even trying to find out what those future value were.

### [Taking their Chances: Many consumers, dealers shun lock-in oil prices](#)

Many consumers are wary of locking in winter prices now after last year, he said, since



“2008 was just an impossible year to predict, given the fact we had a massive run-up through the middle of July and then we had a massive decline” come fall.

“We had a lot of consumers who were scared (during the summer) and locked in, and apparently regretted it later,” he said. “Last year was historic in terms of the behavior of energy markets.”

### [Nigeria: Nigeria-Russia Set to Sign Nuclear Deal](#)

Lagos — Nigeria and Russia are to sign a nuclear energy cooperation accord next Wednesday when President Dmitry Medvedev becomes the first Kremlin leader to visit Nigeria, officials said.

### [Indonesia Mud Eruption May Persist for 30 Years, Geologist Says](#)

(Bloomberg) -- An Indonesian mud eruption that displaced about 40,000 people and caused more than \$4.9 billion of damage may keep flowing at its current rate for the next 30 years, according to a geologist in Australia.

...“This is really only an estimate,” Tingay said in a Geological Society of Australia statement. “The high flow rate may only continue for two or three years, or it might continue for hundreds of years.”

### [Community garden under way in Clearlake](#)

The community garden in Clearlake is one of many efforts in the larger community to reconnect Americans to their food sources.

With the average meal traveling 1,200 miles from grower to plate, the local food movement has gained popularity in response to rising oil prices, peak oil and global warming issues.

### [This Boomer Isn't Going to Apologize](#)

I could go on, but you get the point. We partied like it was 1999, paid for it with Ponzi schemes and left the mess for our kids and grandkids to clean up. We're sorry -- so sorry.

Well, *I'm* not. I have two teenagers and an 8-year-old, and I can say firsthand that if boomer parents have anything for which to be sorry it's for rearing a generation of pampered kids who've been chauffeured around to soccer leagues since they were 6. This is a generation that has come to regard rising affluence as a basic human right,

because that is all it has ever known -- until now. Today's high-school and college students think of iPods, designer cellphones and \$599 lap tops as entitlements. They think their future should be as mapped out as unambiguously as the GPS system in their cars.

### [New power-plant drain on rivers sparks debate](#)

New power plants planned along the lower Colorado River could use the same water supply that was denied San Antonio for future growth.

The driving force is simple. Power shortages are forecast for Texas' future — shortages that power companies are rushing to meet with new plants.

But experts, environmental groups and others are beginning to question whether there is enough water available to serve the massive facilities.

### [Norwegian oil refinery aims for change](#)

MONGSTAD, Norway (AFP) – Norway's most polluting industrial site, the Mongstad oil refinery, is now looking to lead the way on fighting climate change.

Located on the country's west coast, the refinery spits out around 1.7 million tonnes of carbon dioxide every year -- a gas that is widely blamed for global warming.

But the Mongstad site will soon start road-testing new technology known as 'Carbon Capture and Storage' (CCS) as its owners look to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide emitted in its day-to-day operations.

### [This is green energy?](#)

Redefining environmental terms to fit state and federal energy policies is nothing new.

In 2002, for example, American Electric Power saved millions of dollars a year by buying latex-covered coal to burn at its Gavin power plant.

The latex didn't reduce pollution, but it qualified as an "alternative fuel" under a federal law that set aside millions in tax credits.

### [Bill McKibben: I'm spewing carbon for your benefit and mine](#)

What do you call a climate change campaigner sitting on an aeroplane? Sheepish. Especially since this flight to London is one of about 100 I've taken this year. I'm a

carbon machine. Do I offset? I do. Do I think it matters? I don't.

### [The struggle against global warming is really war on the poor](#)

The real struggle is about keeping resources and spending locked in the developed world as opposed to releasing them to the emerging world. Forcing expensive changes on Western energy producers and consumers keeps money flowing to the largest companies, from Archer Daniels Midland, busy producing ineffective biofuels while fixing prices and being the 10th largest polluter in the US, to General Electric, happy to join Big Oil as Big Windmill--sorry, Ecomagination.

### [Desert icon Joshua trees are vanishing, scientists say](#)

The ancient plants are dying in the park, the southern-most boundary of their limited growing region, scientists say. Already finicky reproducers, Joshua trees are the victim of global warming and its symptoms -- including fire and drought -- plus pollution and the proliferation of non-native plants. Experts expect the Joshuas to vanish entirely from the southern half of the state within a century.

### [Could we engineer a cooler planet?](#)

After years of deadlock over climate policy, Congress appears poised to enact the first federal limits on greenhouse gas emissions this fall. Yet a growing number of climate scientists and scholars believe that such efforts are likely to be too little, too late to stop warming -- and that, consequently, a broader view of our climate policy options is needed.

### [U.S. Northeast CO2 Permits Fall to Record on Auction](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Contracts for carbon dioxide permits in the U.S. Northeast's "cap-and-trade" program fell to a record low today after prices declined in the latest auction of new allowances.

### [Ecologists' own goal: ozone saver is global warmer](#)

THE green movement's greatest triumph -- the abolition of ozone-destroying CFC gases in the 1980s -- may become its biggest embarrassment because of research showing that their replacements are sharply accelerating global warming.

### [Obama's climate change silence](#)

The top scientific advisers in the Obama administration on Tuesday unveiled a startling new report on what the latest climate science tells us is both already happening and likely to happen in the near future if planet-warming emissions continue unhindered. The report is astounding – in the foreseeable future, the United States could witness the submersion of the Florida Keys, up to 100 days of more-than-100-degree heat in places like Texas and the end of a domestic maple syrup industry.

For those who were paying attention, these were shocking findings. But it's not quite clear who, if anyone, is actually paying attention. Obama himself has been notably absent from the conversation, when his attention is likely the only voice that could move this issue forward.

### [U.S. Climate Bill to Cost \\$22 Billion a Year by 2020, CBO Says](#)

(Bloomberg) -- A proposed “cap-and-trade” law to cut U.S. greenhouse gas emissions would cost \$22 billion a year by 2020, or \$175 for every household, the Congressional Budget Office said.

### [The Philippines: Warming could cut rice production by 75 percent: Rice riots must be averted](#)

RICE production will decline by as much as 75 percent in the Philippines if it is not quick enough to adapt to and put in place safeguards against climate change. The decline starts in 2020, according to a study made by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and released this week during a high level regional meeting on the impact of climate change in Asia and the Pacific.

The fall in rice production in the Philippines is the highest in the four countries—RP, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam—covered by the study. Indonesia will have the lowest decline at 35 percent.

### [Global starvation imminent as US faces crop failure](#)

The world faces “mass starvation” following North America’s next major crop failure. And it could even happen before year’s end. So says Chicago-based Don Coxe, who is one of the world’s leading experts on agricultural commodities, so much so that Canada’s renowned BMO Financial Group named the fund after him.

Climate change will cause shorter crop growing seasons and the world’s under-developed farming sector is ill-prepared to make up for the shortfall, Coxe says. He has been following the farming industry for many years and benefits from more than 35 years of institutional investment experience in Canada and the U.S. This includes managing the best-performing mutual fund in the U.S., Harris Investment Management, as recently as 2005.



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