



Drumbeat: August 16, 2009

Posted by [Leanan](#) on August 16, 2009 - 10:55am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[US marines in Afghanistan launch first energy efficiency audit in war zone](#)

The US Marines Corps ordered the first ever energy audit in a war zone today to try to reduce the enormous fuel costs of keeping troops on the ground in Afghanistan.

General James T Conway, the Marines Corps Commandant, said he wanted a team of energy experts in place in Afghanistan by the end of the month to find ways to cut back on the fuel bills for the 10,000 strong marine contingent.

US marines in Afghanistan run through some 800,000 gallons of fuel a day. That's a higher burn rate than during an initial invasion, and reflects the logistical challenges of running counter-insurgency and other operations in the extreme weather conditions of Afghanistan.

[Producer and Import Price Index in July 2009 - Steady prices for the second time in succession compared with previous month](#)

(FSO) - The Producer and Import Price Index calculated by the Federal Statistical Office (FSO) remained on average stable in July 2009 compared with the previous month, as it had already in June. Domestic products registered a price decline of 0.2%. For import products, on the other hand, a rise of 0.2% was observed. This is mainly attributable to higher prices for petroleum products and non-ferrous metals.

[The Tortoise and the Hair-raising Threat](#)

To save our planet we'll have to make sacrifices—and they might include the sage grouse and the desert tortoise.

[When the Power Goes Out, Renewable Energy Trailer Goes to Work in Michigan](#)

Here's a feather in the cap of renewable energy supporters.

When the (baseload, coal and nuclear) power went out after storms in Muskegon, a

mobile renewable energy unit came to the rescue.

Mobile Gen LLC, an energy company based in Houston, Texas, has been testing a new mobile power generation trailer at the Great Lakes Environmental Research Lab in Muskegon. The lab is an arm of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

[Bugging Out](#)

Simon Beer has spent the past five years trying to convince himself that the Apocalypse will be fun. Not that he calls it the Apocalypse. His fellow survivalists call it TEOFTWAWKI (The End Of The World As We Know It) or the Long Emergency, the Collapse, the Shift or the Event, as in, "There may be marauding bands of cannibals post-Event." But Simon doesn't call it anything at all. "I guess I'd call it 'When the oil runs out'," he says. "I don't really have a name for it." So far this nameless thing has been far from fun: it has cost him his job, his relationship and his health, and it hasn't even started yet.

(An older article, recently out from behind a paywall.)

[Transition Towns Reloaded - a reminder of the importance of our work a year after it all began](#)

A year ago, amidst the phenomenal rise of oil and gas prices, the "Transition Town" concept was introduced to Coromandel by the national co-ordinator of the movement, James Samuel from Waiheke, to a packed Hauraki House Theatre. With Oil then trading at just about US\$150 per barrel and fuel prices breaching the pain level, the spectre of the world's coming predicaments had left the realm of "maybe" and had become palpable to everyone. The world economy, until then still growing at exponential levels but fiscally leveraged to braking point, was soon after running head-long into a wall. Trillions in paper assets, mortgages, retirement funds and real estate values evaporated in giant fireworks throughout the world when it became clear that the future could be leveraged no further like a bottomless ATM machine to fund the largesse of the present. Many New Zealanders too lost some of their retirement savings when NZ's most leveraged of the so called "Finance Companies" collapsed.

[Farmers work the land with next generation](#)

WEST DES MOINES, Iowa - They are lawyers, factory workers, insurance adjusters, even an accountant and a dentist. All share the same dream: They want to farm.

And all have applied to a special Iowa program that tries to link aspiring farmers with seasoned landowners who are looking toward retirement — or just planning for the future.

[Parts of Texas see worst drought on record](#)

DALLAS - The most parched areas of Texas have been wilting in the blistering heat for two years, but only now is it now official: This is their worst drought in recorded history.

Texas state climatologist John Nielsen-Gammon said Friday that at least nine of the 254 counties in Texas — the nation's most drought-stricken state — are suffering through their driest conditions since modern record-keeping began in 1895.

[Demand for alligator skin plummets](#)

"My father was in the fur and alligator business. I started buying fur and alligators when I was 13 years old," said Wayne Sagera, 65, who has about 75,000 alligators at Vermilion Gator Farm Inc. in Abbeville. "I've seen some slowdowns. But nothing to compare to this."

People who are still buying expensive accessories have shifted away from conspicuous consumption — for instance, Jimmy Choo is selling obvious faux-crocodile as well as the real thing, fashion consultant Robert Burke said.

"There's certainly a sensitivity in the luxury market of anything that is too much luxury, and alligator would fit into that category," Burke said.

[River Basin Fight Pits Atlanta Against Neighbors](#)

ATLANTA — The residents of the economic engine of the South, as they like to call this comparatively gleaming and rapidly expanding state capital, have always suspected that they are the objects of resentment from their more rural neighbors.

Now they are certain of it.

A recent court defeat has left Atlanta howling that its enemies, including Alabama and Florida, are trying to choke off the city's prosperity, if not out of sheer spite then at least the misguided notion that jobs and money would flow to them instead. The conflict is the timeworn rural-versus-urban enmity writ large, a battle over water that has pitted Atlanta against its neighbors in and out of Georgia.

[Learning from the British in Iraq](#)

Under the terms of the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), President Barack Obama is currently bound to withdraw all U.S. forces from Iraq by the end of 2011. Three factors, however, make it probable that the president will attempt to renegotiate the terms of the agreement as it approaches its conclusion: Iraqi security forces will continue to be logistically dependent on the U.S. military. The United States will be increasingly

dependent on oil from Iraq and the wider region. And the American left will be unable to exert significant electoral pressure on the legislative or executive branch, given the U.S. foreign policy establishment's calculation of the strategic consequences of a complete withdrawal.

[US pledges to support Pakistan in energy crisis](#)

Islamabad - The United States on Sunday agreed with Pakistan to shift the focus of its engagement toward tackling economic and energy problems in the country reeling from militant violence.

[Low-Income Families Shortchanged By The Legislature](#)

Last year more than 231,000 Connecticut households - many with young children, sick, or elderly family members - owed substantially more for their energy bills than they could afford. According to Operation Fuel's home energy affordability gap study for 2008, lower-income Connecticut families on average owed over \$2,200 more in energy bills than they had the resources for. This added up to a home energy affordability gap of more than \$510 million for Connecticut's lower income households.

In addition, many families needed energy assistance for the first time ever this winter as the economy worsened and people continued to lose their jobs. Without Operation Fuel and its energy banks, Connecticut households that do not qualify for federal assistance would have had nowhere to turn.

[A Billion Teenagers, for Better or Worse](#)

Fresh population projections put the number of humans over seven billion in 2011, just 12 years after humanity passed the six billion mark. What's most notable in the new analysis is confirmation that while fertility rates are dropping in many places, some of the world's most turbulent and poverty-stricken regions are seeing explosive population growth leading to enormous numbers of teenagers and children.

[Park ranger asks: Where are the black visitors?](#)

Johnson, a musician, storyteller and interpretive specialist at Yosemite National Park, is determined to inspire young inner-city African Americans to experience what he says transformed his life. Less than 1 percent of the visitors to Yosemite are African American, a number he's eager to improve.

"It's bigger than just African Americans not visiting national parks. It's a disassociation from the natural world," said Johnson, who has worked in Yosemite for the past 15 of his 22 years in the Park Service. "I think it is, in part, a memory of the horrible things that were done to us in rural America."

The rejection of the natural world by the black community, he said, is a scar left over from slavery.

[Bottled Water Boom Appears Tapped Out](#)

The recession has finally answered the question that centuries of philosophers could not: The glass is half-empty.

That's because sales of bottled water have fallen for the first time in at least five years, assailed by wrathful environmentalists and budget-conscious consumers, who have discovered that tap water is practically free. Even Nestle, the country's largest seller of bottled water, is beginning to feel a bit parched. On Wednesday, it reported that profits for the first half of the year dropped 2.7 percent, its first decline in six years.

[Environmental movies have a green problem: money](#)

Despite 'Food, Inc.'s' success, few new ecological documentaries are enjoying robust box-office takes. Chalk it up to audiences preferring escapist tales rather than disturbing reality.

[Selling Americans on a 'Green-Collar' Economy](#)

Van Jones may have one of the hottest assignments in the Obama administration -- selling the notion of a new "green-collar" economy -- but in a country burdened with a 9.4 percent unemployment rate, it's not easy.

[Australia: Saving planet may lure students back to science](#)

TACKLING modern problems such as climate change is a key element of a new program to fight the chronic problem of older secondary students shunning the subject of science.

Targeting year 9 and 10 students, trials of the locally developed science program known as STELR - Science and Technology Education Leveraging Relevance - have proved so successful that it has secured Federal Government funding and will be rolled out to 180 schools next year.

[In Obama Garden, Less Lead](#)

After tests of the White House's kitchen garden site revealed high levels of lead, workers added lime, crab meal and compost to the soil in order to improve it.

[Follow sun into desert for richest source of solar power](#)

Sen. Dianne Feinstein appears to like deserts so much that she wants them to stretch from Oklahoma to California and cover one-third of the planet. Nineteen companies have submitted applications to build solar or wind facilities in the Mojave Desert, but Feinstein has said that these renewable energy plants would violate the spirit of what conservationists intended when they donated much of the land to the public.

[As Prices Slump, Solar Industry Suffers](#)

A run of poor earnings has damped confidence in once-booming solar companies.

Shares in LDK Solar, a Chinese solar manufacturer, fell by 18 percent after the company reported a larger than expected second-quarter loss.

Shares in JA Solar, another Chinese company, fell nearly 8 percent after its earnings report on Wednesday; the company's revenue dropped by 51 percent compared with a year earlier.

For manufacturers, the problem boils down to a sharp drop in panel prices amid increased supply and tighter demand. Panel prices have fallen by nearly 40 percent from their peak last spring, estimates Chris Whitman, the president of U.S. Solar Finance, which helps arrange bank financing for solar projects.

[Solar industry's promises bring environmental challenges for Tennessee](#)

As the state tries to reap the benefits of a growing solar industry that could bring thousands of new jobs and billions in new investment, the massive projects also bring with them environmental challenges in the form of intensive manufacturing operations that will draw a tremendous amount of electricity from the state's power grid used to run sprawling chemical reactors.

[Once a leader, state's been eclipsed on renewables](#)

California has always been a pioneer, and nowhere is this myth more compelling than in the world of energy. But time has not been kind to the Golden State. With state legislators getting back to work Monday, their votes in the coming weeks may help determine whether California can regain some of its luster, or continue to fade away into the sunset as an iconoclastic and now largely irrelevant player on the national and international stage.

[Energy Frontiers: Space Solar, Hot Lots](#)

Martin Hoffert, an emeritus physics professor at New York University, has long made the case that a powerful push is needed in basic inquiry — comprising the first two steps in the research, development, demonstration, deployment chain — to supply non-polluting energy to humanity as it heads toward 9 billion people. He and his “discouraged” proposal seeking Energy Department financing (for a test of pumping solar power from orbit to Earth) were the focus of a piece on Clean Skies TV this week.

[A New Focus on Ocean Conservation](#)

Conservationists are turning their attention toward the sea as development pressures mean less land contiguously available for protection.

[2 Studies Challenge Notion of Rise in Atlantic Storms](#)

Since the mid-1990s, hurricanes and tropical storms have struck the Atlantic Ocean with unusual frequency — or have they? Two new studies suggest that the situation may not be so clear.

[‘Glaciers may melt, rivers may go dry’](#)

New Delhi: Urging people to efficiently use the country’s limited natural resources, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh cautioned that if timely measures are not taken against effects of global warming, glaciers would melt and rivers would go dry.

In his address to the nation on its 63rd Independence Day on Saturday, Dr Singh also suggested "save water" as a national slogan.

[Yankees’ Postgame Wrap-Up in the Name of Charity](#)

The Blue Jays-Yankees game Wednesday was in the sixth inning when the hot dogs, hamburgers and sushi started arriving in Yankee Stadium’s underground food warehouse.

Into the 11th inning and after the game, the food came off freight elevators from luxury boxes, clubs and concession stands, in metal trays, on rolling racks and in boxes.

Carl Thomas, a warehouse worker recovering from his own hard times, packs the prepared, unserved food that is delivered after each game to hungry people.

“I just feel good doing this, you know?” Thomas said in a quiet, gravelly voice. “They call it a natural high.”

The food was headed to a local church, not to a distant landfill, because of Rock and Wrap It Up, an antipoverty think tank that arranges for churches, shelters and agencies to pick up postgame and postconcert leftovers for their pantries, food banks and soup kitchens.

[Three food-related problems with one solution](#)

Two-thirds of Americans are classified as obese or overweight, a vast majority are afflicted with financial concerns, and 100 percent are affected by climate change and environmental degradation.

Huge numbers of us spend precious money on diet books, Nutrisystem, and gym memberships while gas guzzling food distribution trucks spew emissions across the country.

Yet hidden behind our rampant consumerism, a simple and overarching solution exists to address problems of obesity, finances, and the environment.

[An Amazon Culture Withers as Food Dries Up](#)

Deforestation and, some scientists contend, global climate change are making the Amazon region drier and hotter, decimating fish stocks in this area and imperiling the Kamayurá's very existence. Like other small indigenous cultures around the world with little money or capacity to move, they are struggling to adapt to the changes.

"Us old monkeys can take the hunger, but the little ones suffer — they're always asking for fish," said Kotok, the tribe's chief, who stood in front of a hut containing the tribe's sacred flutes on a recent evening. He wore a white T-shirt over the tribe's traditional dress, which is basically nothing.

[Qaeda stronger as blasts feed Iraqi Kurd-Arab feud](#)

MOSUL, Iraq (Reuters) — A series of huge bombings in northern Iraq have triggered fiery accusations of blame between Arabs and Kurds, escalating a dispute over land and oil that has played into the hands of a resurgent al Qaeda.

Truck bombings and suicide attacks have killed scores of people and caused enormous destruction in northern Iraq near the troubled city of Mosul this month, which lies close to territory disputed by Iraq's Arab majority and minority ethnic Kurds.

[Florida Braces for Tropical Storm as Ana, Bill Slowly Approach](#)

(Bloomberg) -- A tropical storm warning was issued for the coastal communities of the Florida panhandle and the northeastern Gulf of Mexico as a tropical depression formed late yesterday, the U.S. National Hurricane Center said.

Tropical storms Ana and Bill, which both consolidated yesterday, are slowly moving west in the Atlantic, the center said.

[Sen. Mary Landrieu pushes to lift ban on drilling in eastern Gulf of Mexico](#)

Sensing a shifting attitude among Floridians who have historically opposed drilling off of the state's coast, U.S. Sen. Mary Landrieu, D-La., is again pushing to lift a ban on oil and gas development in the eastern Gulf of Mexico.

[Oman oil production up to 807,000 barrels a day](#)

MUSCAT (KUNA) -- Oman succeeded in raising its oil production to 807,000 barrels a day in June in harmony with the 2009 general budget estimates, Undersecretary of the Oil and Gas Ministry Nasser Khamis Al-Jashmi said Sunday.

The 2009 general budget was based on average production of 805,000 barrels a day.

The government will continue implementing its plan to increase production, Al-Jashmi said in a press release.

[Kuwaiti Islamic bank returns to investments in US](#)

KUWAIT CITY (AP) -- Kuwait's largest Islamic bank said Sunday it has signed a \$450 million deal with a U.S. real estate investment trust to buy high income residential real estate in major American major cities.

[Going 'green' in the kitchen](#)

You don't have to invest in a Prius or renounce electricity to green up your life. A new breed of "green" cookbooks advocates small but significant changes in your kitchen and your cooking habits that will increase your contribution to the earth's salvation.

[Canada Line subsidy will be felt for years to come](#)

The 19-kilometre Canada Line will open with great political fanfare on Monday (August 17).

The public will be allowed to ride for free from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m. on the line, which runs from Waterfront Station to Richmond Centre and to the airport.

But that's when the free ride will end. TransLink has already acknowledged that it might take until 2013 before the Canada Line generates 100,000 riders per day.

And that could be bad news for taxpayers and transit riders.

[Can Lode sustain itself?](#)

SAN ANDREAS - After a history scarred by the booms and busts of gold mining and logging, it might seem unlikely that Calaveras County and neighboring portions of the Sierra Nevada would emerge as a hub for how communities can survive and thrive during economic, social and environmental turmoil.

Yet that seems to be exactly what is happening.

Some call it permaculture. Some call it sustainable design. Some call it economic conversion. A variety of groups ranging from private nonprofits to collaborations of government agencies to a loose network of community gardeners are all working on the long-term survival issue. They're growing vegetables for the hungry, finding new ways to manage forests, and training people in energy efficient construction technologies and how to incorporate food production into home site design.

[Obama's EPA plans fewer toxic cleanups](#)

WASHINGTON — For years, the Bush administration was criticized for not cleaning up enough of the nation's most contaminated waste sites. The Obama administration plans to do even less.

Environmental groups and some Democratic lawmakers railed against President George W. Bush's cleanup record. But this time, they're shying away from speaking out against a popular president who's considered an ally in the fight to clean up the environment.

[California employees face quandary over carbon offsets](#)

But one global green leader does not offset its travel, even though its employees regularly fly around the world warning about the dangers of climate change and devising strategies to combat it. That leader is the state of California.

"As a state employee, you are put in an awkward situation," said Tony Brunello, deputy secretary of climate change and energy at the Natural Resources Agency who has traveled to Europe, South America and Indonesia.

"We are trying to push (emissions) reductions," Brunello said. "It would help us, as state workers, to have some clear direction on what you do and you don't offset."

[Coastal property owners wary of climate change, unwilling to pocket remedies](#)

BELFAST, Maine — An overwhelming majority of southern and midcoast Maine coastal property owners surveyed by researchers expressed serious concerns about the potential impacts of climate change on their area.

But in an indication of the challenge facing both scientists and policy makers, most respondents said they were unsure about what can and should be done to prevent loss of valuable coastal land due to more rapid erosion, sea-level rise and stronger storms.

And property owners expressed little interest in digging deeply into their own pockets to mitigate the effects of climate change, preferring instead grants or for local towns to take the lead.

[June's record ocean warmth worries fishermen, environmentalists](#)

WASHINGTON — Ocean surface temperatures around the world were the warmest on record for the month of June, according to federal scientists, though they caution that one month doesn't necessarily imply global warming.

The warmer temperatures do confirm that an ocean phenomenon known as El Nino is building in the Pacific Ocean .

Some scientists think that the rising temperatures hint at broader changes, perhaps resulting from global climate change. Environmentalists and fishermen are wary of what it may mean.



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