



## Drumbeat: September 21, 2009

Posted by [Leanan](#) on September 21, 2009 - 9:03am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

### [Firms Start to See Climate Change as Barrier to Profit](#)

As the real-world impacts of climate change begin to materialize and regulation of greenhouse gases appears more likely, corporate America has begun to grapple with a challenging question: How do you quantify the risks associated with climate change?

The answer depends on one's perspective. But companies are beginning to show increased willingness to disclose the extent to which they're contributing to global warming and what they're doing to keep it from harming their business.

"If we don't move now, it just becomes more expensive, more complicated and a bigger risk," said Brad Figel, director of government affairs at Nike, at a Capitol Hill briefing last week sponsored by Oxfam America.

and adventure book on Amazon.com was Patriots: Surviving the Coming Collapse, a work described to me by its author, James Wesley Rawles, as a "survival manual dressed as fiction." Its plot appeals to those on the political right, who fear a too-powerful government—and the anarchy to come in the wake of its inevitable collapse. Leftie off-the-gridders gravitate more to the "grow-local" approach championed by author Michael Pollan. "We're using up the world's resources more quickly than you could imagine," says Ruby Blume of the Institute of Urban Homesteading. "I think we need to be prepared."

Lately, homesteaders of all political stripes have settled upon a common concern: globalization. The shock waves of any crisis—for instance, the subprime meltdown—now spread far, fast and wide. Many doubt that major institutions can be counted upon to save the day. "You're on your own, your job is at risk, and a lot of the commodities you rely upon are vulnerable to disruption," says John Robb, author of Brave New War, which describes how terrorists could exploit global systems. To my ear, such statements straddle the line between reasonable advice and hyperventilated threat. One day you're sipping a frappuccino. The next you're using a pitchfork to fend off rioting mobs. But even if I don't fully agree with the dystopian diagnosis, I like Robb's proposed cure: "You're going to have to start doing more for yourself." The beauty of the DIY solution is that the exact problem doesn't matter; greater self-sufficiency makes sense to survivalists and eco-utopians alike.

### [Greens Not Happy About EPA Guidelines](#)

New fuel-economy rules proposed by the federal Department of Transportation and the

Environmental Protection Agency are the first major move by the U.S. toward cracking down on greenhouse-gas emissions. The proposed program includes miles-per-gallon requirements and national emissions standards under the EPA's greenhouse-gas-emissions guidelines for model years from 2012 to 2016.

You'd think that environmental groups would be overjoyed.

Hardly. What has them worried are all the pro-industry rule tweaks and what they see as slanted calculations. "Automakers lobbied hard to include loopholes in the Administration's proposal," says Dan Becker, director of the Safe Climate Campaign at the Center for Auto Safety.

### [Toyota falling behind rivals in the race to go electric](#)

TOKYO — Despite Toyota's image as the world's greenest automaker, the company that brought us the Prius — totem of the environmentally conscious — has fallen behind in the race for the all-electric car.

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### [Santance warns of oil price shock](#)

The oil price will stay high for the next decade and could be the cause of the next "big global shock" in the worldwide economy, according to Andrew Santance, one of nine economists at the Bank of England charged with keeping a lid on inflation.

### [Bracing for a time of tumult](#)

It was all Sturm und Drang at the Friday morning presentations at the Global Business Forum.

Participants were jolted awake by the comments made by author and journalist Gwynne Dyer, whose grim message was that the world is heating much faster than scientists anticipated. Without strong and swift action aimed at reversing the trend, said Dyer, the world faces an apocalyptic future of famine, unpredictable weather patterns and drought. And these were just a few of the highlights.

### [Fair carbon means no carbon for rich countries](#)

WHAT might a truly fair and effective solution to climate change look like? One answer to that question has just been released and it makes for disturbing reading. For one thing, the scale and speed of emissions cuts required by developed nations is far greater than the commitments governments are currently willing to make.

### [2009 Green Rankings](#)

Our exclusive environmental ranking of America's 500 largest corporations.

### [Randy Udall: Can Shale Gas Save the Planet?](#)

In late August the Vancouver Sun ran an article on the bullish prospects for Canadian shale gas. The piece began this way: "What energy crisis? Despite what you may be hearing about a global peak in oil production, waning reserves, and \$100-plus oil prices, North America is suddenly awash in fossil fuel."

The most arresting quote came from Mike Graham of EnCana, a Canadian company that holds dominant positions in British Columbia's Montney and Horn River plays. "Natural gas will displace coal. It will displace oil. There is no reason North America shouldn't be energy self-sufficient if we can displace a lot of the oil with natural gas."

Are we all of a sudden "awash in fossil fuel?" On the road to "energy self-sufficiency?"

### [Medvedev bears gifts and a growl](#)

MOSCOW - Russia's President Dmitry Medvedev, who makes a state visit to Switzerland on Monday, has presented two bear cubs to the capital Bern, along with a growl that if any harm comes to Victor Vekselberg, a Russian oil and aluminum oligarch, all the Russian money that goes into, or is at present sitting in, Switzerland may vanish.

### [China's August Fuel Sales Rise to Highest This Year on Recovery](#)

(Bloomberg) -- China's domestic oil-product sales rose to the highest this year as the

economic recovery spurred demand, the China Petroleum and Chemical Industry Association said in a report.

Fuel sales in August increased 3.2 percent to 18.78 million metric tons from a year earlier and 8.1 percent from July, the association said in the monthly report sent to Bloomberg News on Sept. 19.

### [Iran eyes launch of gas deal with Switzerland: official](#)

TEHRAN (Xinhua) -- Managing director of National Iranian Gas Export Company expressed hope on Monday that the gas deal between Iran and Switzerland would be implemented within the next few months, the semi-official Fars news agency reported.

"The agreement to sell natural gas to Switzerland is among the most important deals... It has been finalized and there only remained some pricing differences which will be resolved within the next few days," Seyed Reza Kassaeizadeh was quoted as saying.

### [Libya Wealth Fund to Buy Verenex in Cash Deal](#)

Canada-based oil producer Verenex Energy said it has agreed to be sold to the Libyan Investment Authority for about 314.1 million Canadian dollars (\$293.7 million) in cash, after a better deal with a Chinese firm fell through.

### [Norway to consider increasing 2020 CO2 cuts](#)

OSLO (Reuters) - Norway will consider cutting its greenhouse gas emissions by more than a planned 30 percent by 2020 if it helps a U.N. climate deal due in Copenhagen in December, Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg said Monday.

Norway, the world's number five oil exporter, has already adopted a goal of cutting its emissions by 30 percent by 2020, partly by using its vast oil wealth to buy carbon emissions quotas on international markets.

### [Audit Finds Waste in 'Green' Projects](#)

The four drafty buildings had been fixtures of the Energy Department complex in Oak Ridge, Tenn., for more than half a century. They burned energy like 1950s sedans.

The buildings seemed like perfect candidates for a federal conservation retrofit program that relies on private contractors that receive a percentage of the money they save. A deal was struck in 2001. The contractors reworked lighting and heating systems, among other things, and began collecting payments.

The project was counted among the department's "green" successes -- until auditors discovered that the buildings had been torn down several years ago, and the government had paid \$850,000 for energy savings at facilities that no longer existed.

### [Obama Allows Sen. McConnell to Appoint Foxes to Guard Chicken Coops](#)

President Barack Obama's willingness to follow the tradition of allowing the Senate GOP leader to appoint members to two oversight boards has government watchdogs upset. Senator Mitch McConnell (R-KY) has chosen former aide and energy lobbyist Scott O'Malia to sit on the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) and Michael V. Hayden, who headed the National Security Agency under President George W. Bush, to the Public Interest Declassification Board. In both cases, the appointees' previous work has raised concerns because they contradict the missions of their new oversight bodies.

### [Seeking the Smart Money](#)

Utilities have been flooding the U.S. Department of Energy with applications for a piece of the \$4.5 billion set aside in the federal stimulus package for smart-meter and demand-response projects.

Smart-grid companies provide technologies like meters, software, networking infrastructure and voltage regulators to help customers consume energy more efficiently. Demand-response companies provide technologies and services designed to reduce or shut off energy use during times of peak demand, relieving pressure on the grid.

### [UK: Worry over energy cuts](#)

CONSERVATIVE Parliamentary candidate David Mowat has warned homes and businesses across town that they could be facing power cuts.

For the first time since the three-day week of the 1970s, consumers will be told to prepare for blackouts, since the supply of electricity will fail to meet demand at peak times he argued.

### [Three Gorges Power Plant among world's top ten renewable energy projects](#)

As the world's largest hydropower station, the Three Gorges Power Plant has been chosen by internationally-renowned science magazine Scientific American as one of "the world's top ten renewable energy projects," reporters learned from China Three Gorges Project Corporation.

## [Kunstler: Original Sin](#)

Suburbia was engineered as the antidote to the Kramden's apartment: country-living-for-everybody. The evacuation of the cities to the new outlands proceeded as relentlessly as the landings at Normandy. It wasn't until the program was well underway that the self-destructive essence of it became obvious -- that every new housing subdivision killed the original rural character of the land, with the result that suburban life quickly became a cartoon of country living in a cartoon of a country house in a cartoon of the country. With additional layer-on-layer of, first, the shopping in the form of highway strips, then malls, along with the office "parks," these places elaborated themselves into a kind of cancer-of-the-landscape, a chronic and expensive condition that Americans had no choice but to live with, because of the monumental investments they had already made in it. The discontents it produced lent it to psychological depression and dark humor, just as chronic illness does. But we were stuck with it.

## [Don't despair — get out there and do something](#)

Yes, we've entered the Anthropocene Era, an epoch in which human activity is overpowering the natural world. This is what Bill McKibben means by "the end of nature." And let's be clear, too, that there's no going back. The world you grew up in is gone forever. We are already feeling the impact of climate change, which has such momentum that if we stopped greenhouse gas emissions tomorrow, the changes would continue for decades.

But, Turner says, that doesn't justify surrender. The environmental battle needs to be intensified, possibly using startling new weapons like "geoengineering," the deliberate alteration of the planet to counteract the changes we've already set in motion. Or nanotechnology. Perhaps we need a philosophy of "social-ecological resilience," accepting change as "the natural state of being on Earth" and targeting our conservation efforts on the life forms with the best chance of survival. But this is a time for action, not for despair.

## [Study reveals that Europe must change perspectives towards food security](#)

A new report by leading food and sustainability scientists calls for Europe to take a new approach on food security, prioritizing health and sustainability in research and using a holistic view when making policy. The report has been jointly chaired by Peter Raspor, professor of food science and technology at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia and Rudy Rabbinge, professor of sustainable development and systems innovation at Wageningen University, the Netherlands.

## [Carolyn Baker - Disaster: the gift that keeps on giving, or finding paradise in hell](#)

Solnit notes that horrible disasters have shaped the lives of some people who have



become luminaries of healing and social change. One notable example is Dorothy Day who was eight years old when the San Francisco earthquake struck, and the most profound memory she took from the disaster was that "While the crisis lasted, people loved each other." The impact of that love shaped Day's life and work as she devoted herself entirely to organizing people to meet the needs of the poor and to create a more just and magnanimous society.

### [How can lower-carbon behaviour be mainstreamed?](#)

Changing the public's use of energy at home and on the move is critical for reducing the UK's overall contribution to climate change. However, beyond the environmentally inclined, there is a very substantial group of people who are doing very little in response to climate change communications and policies. ippr's Consumer Power research has investigated why this has been the case and how lower-carbon behaviour can be stimulated among a key segment of this group.

### [Soap Box Derby hopes green image sprouts a sponsorship](#)

The Soap Box Derby, an American icon clinging to nostalgia in a digital age, has hit a financial pothole that threatens the winner's-circle dreams of kid cart racers coast-to-coast.

Desperate for a title sponsor after two years without one, the 75-year-old youth racing program is on a mission to reinvent itself as something it's always been but never thought to promote: green.

### [Russian oil exports called unsustainable](#)

Russia can't sustain the rise in oil exports that saw it surpass Saudi Arabia as the world's top exporter for the first time in the post-Soviet period, according to OAO Rosneft, the country's biggest oil producer.

The trend of increasing oil exports isn't sustainable as the domestic market becomes more attractive for Russian oil producers and tax breaks for exports are lifted, Peter O'Brien, Rosneft's vice president for finance and investment, told reporters Sunday near Moscow.

### [Oil Options Hit Highs as Verleger Predicts 44% Plunge](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Oil traders are paying more than ever in the options market to protect against a plunge in crude prices.

The gap between prices of options betting on a decline and those that would profit from

a rise in oil widened to a record 10 percentage points, according to five years of data compiled by Banc of America Securities-Merrill Lynch. Crude stockpiles in the U.S. are 14 percent larger than a year ago and OPEC is pumping 600,000 barrels a day more than the world needs, according to the International Energy Agency.

### [N.Y. Natural Gas Set to Decline Below \\$3: Technical Analysis](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Natural gas futures, which jumped 28 percent last week, may revisit seven-year lows after surging into an “overbought” area of resistance between \$3.58 and \$3.87 per million British thermal units, according to a technical analysis by Barclays Capital.

Gas tumbled 82 percent from a high of \$13.694 per million Btu in July 2008 to touch \$2.409 on Sept. 4. Gas then surged 57 percent through Sept. 18. The futures have entered a resistance zone and the downtrend is likely to resume, MacNeil Curry, a New York-based analyst at Barclays, said in an interview.

### [Aruba Premier Expects Agreement With PetroChina Soon, ANP Says](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Aruban Prime Minister Nelson Oduber expects to be able to agree soon with PetroChina Co. about the sale of a Valero Energy Corp. refinery on the island, Dutch news agency ANP reported, citing the politician.

The refinery is placed “well in the market” given the \$16 billion oil exploration agreement between China and Venezuela earlier this month, the Dutch-language agency cited Oduber as saying in a report dated Sept. 20. Talks are under way, he said, according to ANP. Aruba is in the southern Caribbean Sea, north of Venezuela.

### [EarthTalk: using rainwater and goats](#)

For most of us, the rain that falls on our roof runs off into the ground or the sewer system. But if you're motivated to save a little water and re-distribute it on your lawns or plants—or even use it for laundry, dishes or other interior needs—collecting rainwater from your gutters' downspouts is a no-brainer.

If it's allowed in your state, that is. Utah and parts of Washington State have antiquated but nonetheless tough laws banning anyone but owners of water rights from collecting rainwater flowing off privately owned rooftops. Such laws are rarely enforced, however, and one in Colorado was recently overturned.

### [Guerilla gardening better choice](#)



The use of subversive tactics to change notions of land ownership may not seem like something that would have a reason to catch on in this country.

Why would anyone care when any kind of food imaginable can be obtained in one trip to the grocery store?

However, guerilla gardening is taking hold in many industrialized nations to demonstrate exactly why we should care about the land and be involved with how it is used.

### [Brighton seeks to become UK food capital](#)

A drive to turn Brighton and Hove into the food growing capital of the UK was launched today.

The Harvest Brighton and Hove initiative aims to show why urban agriculture should be taken seriously by decision-makers and supported by planning policy.

It wants to encourage food growing on allotments, gardens, parks, vacant land, balconies, rooftops, around public buildings and on housing estates.

The scheme aims to tackle the challenge of maintaining a sustainable and secure food supply in the face of climate change, peak oil and other global uncertainties.

### [Fans take to bicycles to hear tunes](#)

A little pedal power gave the third annual Can Change Festival a little extra push Saturday, as hundreds of people visited the waterfront for the environmental festival.

While the festival boasted an increase in attendance, more displays and vendors and workshops, musical guests Mr. Something Something performed a bicycle-powered concert.

The group has been using their audience's energy and bicycles to power their amps and microphones for the past year as they have travelled across Canada playing unconventional venues.

### [Once Slave to Luxury, Japan Catches Thrift Bug](#)

In the 1970s and '80s, and even as the economy limped through the '90s, a wide group of consumers spent generously on Louis Vuitton bags and Hermès scarves — even at the expense of holidays, travel and, sometimes, meals and rent.

Now, the Japanese luxury market, worth \$15 billion to \$20 billion, has been among the

hardest hit by the global economic crisis, according to a report by the consulting firm McKinsey & Company. Retail analysts, economists and consumers all say that the change could be a permanent one. A new generation of Japanese fashionistas does not even aspire to luxury brands; they are happy to mix and match treasures found in a flurry of secondhand clothing stores that have sprung up across Japan.

### [East German auto 'icon' might return as EV](#)

FRANKFURT - A vastly updated version of the boxy, smoky Trabant compact made in communist East Germany could be in production by 2012 as an electric powered green machine — but only if the company finds the right investor.

### [Electric bikes start to gain traction](#)

SEATTLE (Reuters) - Ever wondered what it would be like to have Lance Armstrong pedal your bike for you? Well now you can find out, sort of.

About 15 companies are now offering bicycles with an electric power option -- as opposed to a purely engine-powered moped -- for around \$1,000 to \$4,000 -- and they are catching on with some green-thinking commuters.

### [Beans might give you and your car gas](#)

A Lehigh Valley, Pa., environmentalist is pushing ahead with plans to power vehicles not with gasoline or diesel, but with the moldy bread, banana peels and rotten meats that would otherwise be dumped in area trash heaps.

Microbiologist Rex D'Agostino wants to build a pilot plant that would transform food waste into natural gas to power specially suited vehicles.

If he's successful, officials believe, the plant would be the first of its kind on the East Coast.

### [For car makers, it's suddenly all about electric](#)

A visitor to the Frankfurt Auto Show, the biggest event of its kind, might think all is well in the car world.

Outside the vast exhibition halls, auto makers may be firing tens of thousands of workers and losing billions. But inside, the cars gleam like polished gemstones, exhibitors swill champagne and executives and engineers burble enthusiastically about the dawn of a new era: The electric car is here.

### [China Submits New-Energy Plan to Cabinet Before Copenhagen Meet](#)

(Bloomberg) -- China submitted a plan to develop alternative forms of energy such as wind and nuclear to the Cabinet for approval and may announce the proposal before the Copenhagen climate talks, said a government researcher.

The New-Energy Development Plan is pending final approval from the State Council, Zhou Fengqi, an adviser to the energy research institute at the National Development and Reform Commission, said in a telephone interview today. The plan will include some revised “bigger and bolder” goals to develop new types of energy, Zhou said.

### [China hydropower to near double by 2020: state media](#)

BEIJING (AFP) – China's hydropower capacity is expected to nearly double to 300,000 megawatts by 2020, state media said, as the nation powers ahead with the development of renewable energy sources.

Water resources minister Chen Lei, who was quoted by the official Xinhua news agency as giving the target, also said hydropower would play a more important role in China's strategy for energy security in the future.

### [China May Raise Hydro-Power Price in Near Future, Journal Says](#)

(Bloomberg) -- The Chinese government may increase hydro-electric power prices in the “near future,” the China Securities Journal reported, citing Zhang Guobao, the head of the National Energy Administration.

### [Economy, policies energizing Canada's wind sector](#)

TORONTO (Reuters) - Canada's wind power companies are getting a lift from rising oil prices, a healthier economy and energy-friendly government policies, even as tight capital markets continue to curb the recovery of the fledgling sector.

### [College students protest coal use on campuses](#)

COLUMBIA, Mo. – College students nationwide are urging their schools to stop using coal produced at campus power plants or purchased from private utilities in favor of cleaner energy sources ranging from wood chips to geothermal power.

## [World's River Deltas Sinking Due To Human Activity, Says New Study](#)

ScienceDaily — A new study led by the University of Colorado at Boulder indicates most of the world's low-lying river deltas are sinking from human activity, making them increasingly vulnerable to flooding from rivers and ocean storms and putting tens of millions of people at risk.

While the 2007 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report concluded many river deltas are at risk from sea level rise, the new study indicates other human factors are causing deltas to sink significantly. The researchers concluded the sinking of deltas from Asia and India to the Americas is exacerbated by the upstream trapping of sediments by reservoirs and dams, man-made channels and levees that whisk sediment into the oceans beyond coastal floodplains, and the accelerated compacting of floodplain sediment caused by the extraction of groundwater and natural gas.

## [World Needs Carbon Limit of 35 Billion Tons By 2030, Stern Says](#)

(Bloomberg) -- The world needs to limit its greenhouse gas emissions to 35 billion tons by 2030 to avoid temperature increases of 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit), said Nicholas Stern, former chief economist of the World Bank.

Emissions will need to be cut to 20 billion tons in 2050 from about 50 billion tons today, Stern, who's chairman of the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment at London School of Economics and Political Science, said today in an e-mailed statement.

## [Australia's Copenhagen warning, aims at compromise](#)

CANBERRA (AFP) – Australia on Monday said crunch climate change talks in December would fail if a "one size fits all" approach was adopted, instead suggesting a compromise deal aimed at developing nations.

Climate Change Minister Penny Wong said that under the scheme, developing countries would agree to binding goals in areas such as deforestation or renewable energy, rather than signing up to economy-wide emissions targets.

## [US ties, climate change focus of Hatoyama's debut](#)

TOKYO – Just five days in office, Japan's prime minister left Monday for his debut on the world stage, where he is to meet with the leaders of the U.S., China and Russia and promote his ambitious plan to cut greenhouse gases in a speech at the U.N.

Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama was scheduled to hold talks with Chinese President Hu Jintao after arriving in New York late Monday, then attend a climate summit at the U.N.

starting Tuesday.

### [Is Lieberman at it again?](#)

Sen. Joe Lieberman alienated a lot of Democrats last year when he campaigned for John McCain and dismissed Barack Obama as a “talker” rather than a leader.

He may be on the verge of doing it again.

In an effort to resuscitate some version of the House climate change bill in the Senate, the Connecticut independent is trying to get Republicans and moderate Democrats on board by adding money for coal power and nuclear plants — changes that would infuriate many of the bill’s liberal supporters.

### [Climate-Talks Deadlock May Ease as Obama, Hu Offer Views at UN](#)

(Bloomberg) -- China and the U.S., the biggest producers of greenhouse gases, may propose new steps to fight global warming this week as they remain at odds over who should pay for a low-carbon world.

### [Blair touts 10 million jobs from climate action](#)

UNITED NATIONS (AP) -- Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair says he hopes to break the “deadlock” in global climate talks with evidence that 10 million jobs could be created by 2020, if developing nations agree to big cuts in greenhouse gases.

Blair, heading up a climate initiative, released a report that also shows a global climate agreement could increase the world’s GDP by 0.8 percent by 2020, as compared with the projected gross domestic product with no climate action.

### [China Emerges as the Yin and the Yang of the Global Warming Problem](#)

BEIJING -- Staring up at the dazzling, \$32 million screen of light-emitting diodes suspended above one of this city’s luxury shopping malls, it’s hard to see China as a struggling “developing” country.

Sitting on a stone ledge with 34-year-old Wai Shen Ching hundreds of miles away in the remote village of Bai Bulou, it’s hard to see China as anything else.

Residents of this Hebei Province grassland community have no running water. Lately, devastated by drought, the village has had little water at all. Men in straw hats and blue Mao jackets smoke the days away because, they say, farming has come to a standstill.

"There's no water, and there's no way to get water," Ching says, tugging at his gray-and-white camouflage t-shirt as two women in the distance lead a herd of cows into a rocky pasture. "I don't think we have a future. I think it will be the same if you come back here in 10 years."

### [Carbon emissions fall with global downturn: report](#)

LONDON (AFP) – Greenhouse gas emissions have fallen thanks to the global downturn, handing the world a chance to move away from high-carbon growth, a report said Monday, citing an International Energy Agency study.

The unpublished IEA study found carbon emissions from burning fossil fuels had dropped significantly this year -- further than in any year in the past four decades.

Falling industrial output is largely responsible for the plunge in emissions, but other factors also played a role, including shelving plans for new coal-fired power stations because of falling demand and lack of financing.



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