



Drumbeat: September 24, 2009

Posted by [Leanan](#) on September 24, 2009 - 9:05am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[New doomsday map shows planet's dire state](#)

Human activities have already pushed the Earth beyond three of the planet's biophysical thresholds, with consequences that are detrimental or even catastrophic for large parts of the world, conclude 29 European, Australian and U.S. scientists in an article in *Nature*. This force has given rise to a new era - Anthropocene - in which human actions have become the main driver of global environmental change.

"On a finite planet, at some point, we will tip the vital resources we rely upon into irreversible decline if our consumption is not balanced with regenerative and sustainable activity," says report co-author Sander van der Leeuw, of Arizona State University.

The report started with a fairly simple question: How much pressure can the Earth system take before it begins to crash? "Until now, the scientific community has not attempted to determine the limits of the Earth system's stability in so many dimensions and make a proposal such as this. We are sending these ideas out to be vetted by the scientific community at large," explains van der Leeuw.

[s/blogPage/viewBlog/sw_viewBlog.php?idTheme=14&idContribution=2990">Kurt Cobb: Oil Optimists Grow More Outlandish](#)

As the oil crisis deepens in the coming decade, we can be sure that the oil optimists will give us even more outlandishly optimistic estimates of our future oil reserves. These new estimates will in all likelihood rest not on proven discoveries, but on vague yet-to-be discovered resources that will become accessible at some point in the future because of unspecified technological advances. (The question for policymakers is whether it is wise to base policy on such assumptions.)

When pressed on the issue of technology, the optimists point to a myriad of technologies which are helping us find new oil and extract it from difficult places. These technologies include directional drilling, horizontal wells, deepwater drilling platforms, 3D seismic surveys (which reveal in colorful detail what's under the ground and under the seabed), and enhanced oil recovery techniques. The trouble is that none of these technologies are new. In fact, they are all essentially mature, and their widespread application has failed to bring us out of a nearly four-decade-long decline in discoveries.

[Shell to Sell Oilfield Technology to Boost Output](#)

Shell Global Solutions, a unit of Royal Dutch Shell, is pushing to expand its upstream business by selling to oil producers in Asia and the Middle East technology designed to boost output at mature fields, an executive with the company said.

As crude oil becomes increasingly difficult and expensive to access, producers are turning to advanced technologies to increase recovery rates, reduce operating costs and trim downtime at mature fields.

[China's Oil Demand Could Hit 600M Tons By 2020](#)

China's oil demand is expected to reach 560 to 600 million tons in 2020, while the figure in 2015 will be 490 to 520 million tons, said an energy expert with the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC).

Liu Xiaoli, deputy director of Research Center of Energy Economic and Development Strategic under NDRC, made the remark at an energy forum on Beijing on Wednesday.

[Big Oil Keeps Cool to Russian Welcome](#)

Russia will this week put out the welcome mat for Big Oil, as Prime Minister Vladimir Putin hosts a meeting on developing the huge natural-gas reserves of Yamal, one of the energy world's last great prizes. But it is unclear whether any of the world's leading oil companies will be interested in the tough terms Russia is expected to demand.

The meeting is the latest in a series of signals from the Kremlin that Russia might be softening its notoriously Draconian stance on foreign investment in its oil and gas. Moscow has long insisted Yamal was off-limits to the Western majors, and that Russian giant OAO Gazprom would develop the region's resources on its own.

[Wildfire hits farms, threatens oil wells](#)

MOORPARK, Calif. - Crews staged heavy air attacks Thursday to halt the spread of a Southern California wildfire that has chewed through more than 25 square miles of bone dry brush, destroying some farm fields while threatening dozens of homes and valuable oil fields.

[Climate change may trigger earthquakes and volcanoes](#)

FAR from being the benign figure of mythology, Mother Earth is short-tempered and

volatile. So sensitive in fact, that even slight changes in weather and climate can rip the planet's crust apart, unleashing the furious might of volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and landslides.

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[San Francisco's Peak Oil Task Force Report: Excellent, But Lacking](#)

The concept of peak oil in most people's minds conjures up the image of a bell-shaped curve featuring a mirror-image down-slope. This leads most people, including well-known peak-oil specialists, to believe there is still substantial oil to be had after the peak -- knowing that the peak has probably arrived, and the greater difficulty of post-peak extracted lower quality crude oil is taken into account. The San Francisco Peak Oil Preparedness Task Force in its final Report to the Supervisors makes the common mistake of implying the future can use much of these estimated oil supplies.

[John Michael Greer: Why Economists Fail](#)

Economists are not, by and large, stupid people. Those who work in some of the less glamorous subsets of the field have worked out a great many useful tools for businesses and individuals, and the level of mathematical skill to be found among today's "quants" rivals that of many university physics departments. Yet the profession seems to have become incapable of learning from its most glaring and highly publicized mistakes. This is all the more troubling in that you'll find many economists among the pundits who insist that industrial economies need not trouble themselves about the impact of limitless economic growth on the biosphere that supports all our lives. If they're as wrong about that as so many other economists were about the housing bubble, they've made a fateful leap from risking billions of dollars to risking billions of lives.

What lies behind this startling blindness to the evidence of history and the reality of the downside? Plenty of factors doubtless play a part, but three seem most important to me.

[Canada Acquires Subs To Chart Arctic Claims](#)

The Canadian government has taken delivery of two remote-controlled submarines that will be used to document its territorial claims in the Arctic.

[Putin opens Arctic to foreign energy firms](#)

MOSCOW - Prime Minister Vladimir Putin on Thursday opened the door to foreign investment in Russia's gas-rich Yamal Peninsula, in an unusual meeting with global energy bosses deep in the remote Arctic region.

Putin held a televised meeting with a dozen foreign executives of companies including Exxon Mobil, Royal Dutch Shell and Conoco-Phillips in the region which holds immense but hard-to-access gas reserves.

[Review of CNA Report: "Powering America's Defense: Energy and the Risks to National Security"](#)

As the authors of Powering point out, "Moving beyond recent studies on the dangers of imported oil, this 2009 report finds that fossil fuels, as well as the nation's fragile electricity grid, pose significant security threats... .

This is a prudent observation, but the authors might have further explored two frequently overlooked considerations.

First is the contradiction inherent in the popular notion that the USA can achieve "energy independence" by exploiting its precious remaining reserves in order to reduce imports.

From a long-term energy security perspective, it should make more sense to consume someone else's oil and safeguard one's own (within the constraints required to maintain a viable and responsive domestic industry).

Second is the threat of export decline, and here also the Advisory Board has overlooked some recent and highly relevant warnings.

[Nigeria says truce with delta militants holding](#)

UNITED NATIONS (AP) -- A two-month-old truce in Nigeria's oil-rich southern Delta region is holding and the militants have accepted an amnesty offer, according to

Nigeria's Foreign Minister Ojo Maduekwe.

The unrest has cut Nigeria's oil production by a million barrels a day, allowing Angola to overtake it as Africa's top oil producer.

[Reliance May Stop Gas Supply to Anil Ambani Company on Payments](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Reliance Industries Ltd., India's most valuable company, issued a notice to suspend gas supplies to Reliance Infrastructure Ltd for defaulting on payments.

[New oil management law in Mexico](#)

The Secretariat of Energy (Sener) ordered the state-owned Pemex to establish the National System of Hydrocarbon Information, which will include a registry of permits, authorisations, verifications, inspections and decrees for zones where oil will be extracted, among other data within one year following a federal law taking effect today.

[Fiscal Reform Will Hurt Mexico](#)

he tax proposed by the Calderon administration is ill-suited for Mexico's economy, as more consumption taxes (not only the 2 percent sales tax, but also the 4 percent tax on telecommunications and special taxes on selected products) will further depress consumption when the economy has fallen 9 percent during the first semester. Now, considering that the government is also hiking public sector prices beginning with gasoline and electricity, the effect would be a mixture of further recession with more inflation. In this crisis unemployment has risen sharply, adding around 1 million people on an annual basis between unemployed and under-employed, which suggests that social effects will be deleterious.

[XTO's Production Hedging to Lock in 2010 Profits](#)

XTO Energy, one of the nation's most successful independent natural gas and oil producers, has already moved to lock in solid profits for next year by entering into hedging contracts for about 55 percent of its projected 2010 production.

[‘Clunker’ appliance plan still short on details](#)

The rebate program, part of the government's \$787 billion economic stimulus package, provides \$300 million in federal funds to encourage consumers to buy energy-efficient appliances.

But it is unclear how much the appliance program will save in terms of energy

consumption — and whether these appliances will be recycled or just end up in a landfill.

[Old-growth forests felled for America's behinds](#)

It is a fight over toilet paper: the kind that is blanket-fluffy and getting fluffier so fast that manufacturers are running out of synonyms for "soft" (Quilted Northern Ultra Plush is the first big brand to go three-ply and three-adjective).

It's a menace, environmental groups say -- and a dark-comedy example of American excess.

The reason, they say, is that plush U.S. toilet paper is usually made by chopping down and grinding up trees that were decades or even a century old. They want Americans, like Europeans, to wipe with tissue made from recycled paper goods.

[Swallowing Eco-Hype: Are Locavores Really Green?](#)

According to your research, 14 percent of total food purchases are tossed in the trash, and about 27 percent of that is produce. That's a lot of food.

It's a ton of food. Especially for people who have kids. I have two of them, and it's horrifying how much food we waste. I'm sure if someone did a calculation of the energy that went into the food we're throwing out, I'm the problem. But it's not because my food came in on an airplane, it's because I'm throwing it out. But you could also ask questions about the kind of stoves we use. It's common now to just have these enormous gas stoves with these burners that could run a commercial kitchen. It's another way to remind ourselves that when we look at the carbon footprint of our diet, it's so much more immensely complicated than asking where our food came from.

[Low Gas Prices Threaten Green Car Revolution](#)

The single biggest factor determining the success or failure of high-tech fuel-efficient cars is not battery technology, legislation, tax incentives, new model introductions, or infrastructure. It's gas prices. The price at the pumps is the elephant in the room when it comes to green cars. The cost of oil is not the only determinant of prices at the pump—for example, there's refining capacity or lack thereof—but oil does play a major role. When the price of oil jumped to \$147 last year, gas prices raced to \$4 a gallon.

Unfortunately, the most important factor for customer adoption of hybrid and electric cars is also extremely hard to predict. What are experts saying these days?

[A123 IPO priced to charge car battery market](#)

NEW YORK (CNNMoney.com) -- A123 Systems, one of just a handful of U.S.-based makers of batteries for electric cars, far exceeded expectations when its initial public offering priced Wednesday after the bell.

The offering was priced at \$13.50 a share, well above the originally proposed range, and raised \$380 million, according to a Securities and Exchange Commission filing.

[Spain's Answer to Unemployment: Go Greener](#)

MADRID -- As world leaders converge in Pittsburgh for a major economic summit this week, one of the biggest questions they face is this: How do you begin to replace the millions of jobs destroyed by the Great Recession, now that the worst of the crisis has potentially passed?

Here on the sun-drenched and windy Iberian Peninsula, Spain thinks it has an answer: create new jobs and save the Earth at the same time.

[Bringing Solar Power to Africa's Poor](#)

Politicians from 11 southern African countries gathered in Maputo, Mozambique, over the weekend to examine how to address climate change issues without reducing access to energy.

Off-grid solar is seen as one of the continent's strongest options, capitalizing on Africa's abundant sunlight without the need to invest in expensive grid networks.

[What Was Missing from Obama's Climate Speech? Nuclear Power](#)

Much of the post-game analysis of yesterday's big UN climate summit dwells on the lack of specifics offered by the U.S. and China—lack of specific commitments to curb emissions, pass legislation and the like.

But there was one interesting difference in the speeches of President Obama and Hu Jintao: The specific role each country sees for nuclear power.

[German army stops wind turbines as security threat](#)

BERLIN (Reuters) - The German army has identified a series of wind park projects as a threat to national security and blocked investments worth 1.5 billion euros because it fears spinning wind turbines will interfere with its radar systems.

The Bundeswehr has launched an investigation into the impact of the wind turbines planned for northern Germany's coastal area amid concerns they could compromise air defense -- because they could in theory provide a shield for enemy aircraft.

[Natural disasters displacing millions-- UN study](#)

LONDON (Reuters) - Floods, storms, drought and other climate-related natural disasters drove 20 million people from their homes last year, nearly four times as many as were displaced by conflicts, a new U.N. report said on Tuesday.

The study tried to quantify for the first time the number of people forced to flee their homes because of climate change.

[Help! They Can't Find Any More Oil!](#)

Despite spending hundreds of billions of dollars looking for more oil in 2008, replacement rates fell for the first time in four years according to an analysis by IHS Herold.

International oil and gas companies increased exploration spending by 21% in 2008 to \$492 billion, but worldwide oil and gas reserves were .4% lower by year end. There was a 4.4 billion barrel decline in oil reserves.

This isn't a singular event, either. Over the past three years reserves have been flat.

[Finding new oil gets ever more expensive](#)

A new study by research firm IHS Herold illustrates why there are fears of a supply crunch: oil is getting much more expensive to find, but investment in finding new oil is falling this year.

...One significant finding of the study: in the US, *replacement costs more than doubled*.

[Oxy oil discovery could spark new interest in California's energy potential](#)

The biggest find in the state in 35 years, somewhere in Kern County, could herald new exploration in California and the U.S., experts say. But some worry it could lead to a false sense of security.

[The Northeast Passage could enable Russia to blackmail Europe](#)

Moscow would benefit from this commercial pipeline in the Arctic Ocean in two distinct ways. On the one hand it could potentially charge exorbitant transit revenues - thinly disguised as 'icebreaker fees', even when such escort is unnecessary - on ships that move through what it regards as its own 'national waters'. Earlier this year, Russia was levying an extortionate \$16 fee on every ton of oil cargo, compared with the meagre \$1 that Finland charged Baltic shipping.

But more importantly, the Russians could potentially use the Passage as a political bargaining chip, threatening to block or impede the movement of ships that belong to states that don't toe the Moscow line. Russia has never shied from using trade sanctions as a political tool - imposing wine sanctions on Georgia and Moldova in 2006, and banning Polish meat imports in 2007 - or from manipulating the flow of natural gas to Ukraine and Moldova. And the advent of a Northeast Passage, or even the very prospect, would add considerable political firepower to the Kremlin's armoury.

Together with a rise in oil and gas prices, which is widely anticipated over the next few years, this could be a recipe for a politically more muscular Russia. For the Kremlin would be quick to recognise the political leverage the Passage offers, and use it to full effect.

[All systems go at Kashagan](#)

The first phase of Kazakhstan's huge Kashagan oilfield in the Caspian Sea will be 72% complete by the end of this year, with first oil due in 2012, the project operator said today.

[Qatar Sees Energy, Climate Change as Pressing Challenges](#)

Qatar on Wednesday said that energy crisis and climate change are the pressing challenges for the world, and there will be no peace and security in the globe when world civilization is threatened by an energy crisis, which is "far greater than any kind of war."

[Aramco's mission](#)

Saudi Aramco has recently capped a multiyear, multi-megaproject drive to take our maximum sustained crude oil production capacity to 12 million barrels per day, which will help us meet the projected call on our crude oil in the decades to come while also maintaining sufficient spare capacity to help ensure market stability—a key objective of the Kingdom's oil strategy. Saudi Aramco's activities thus cover the whole globe and span the entire petroleum value chain, from reservoir to petrol pump and petrochemical plant—and everything in between.

[Chinese oil contract a first for Abu Dhabi](#)

A Chinese state oil firm has for the first time won an oilfield services contract in Abu Dhabi, in a further sign of deepening commercial ties between the world's second-biggest energy consumer and Gulf oil exporters.

[Kuwait says poised to nab Vietnam oil deal](#)

CAIRO - Kuwait's oil minister said Thursday he expected the country's state-run foreign oil exploration company to win another offshore license in Vietnam by the end of the year, in what would mark the energy rich gulf state's latest push into Asia.

[Nomura May Ally With Partner to Accelerate Commodity Expansion](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Nomura Holdings Inc., the brokerage that acquired Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc.'s Asian and European units, may ally with a partner to accelerate its expansion into commodity markets including crude oil.

[China's New Energy Gold Rush Frothing, Or Not](#)

China's emerging new energy industry is being warned by the government against production surpluses. As a result, as many as 17 provinces and municipalities are deferring their new energy plans to conduct further research.

[Dominican Republic to receive \\$20M loan from Petrocaribe](#)

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic -- The Dominican Republic says it will receive a \$20 million loan from Venezuela's Petrocaribe program to ease an ongoing energy crisis.

Treasury Minister Vicente Bengoa says the loan will help repay what private power companies say is a \$425 million debt.

[Pakistan: Wedding functions to end at 10pm?](#)

LAHORE: In order to overcome the energy crisis, the Punjab government has formulated recommendations to stop unnecessary show of extravagance at weddings and other occasions. The committee has recommended that all wedding functions should be completed by 10pm.

[Gas ring busted: 7 accused of siphoning fuel from tankers](#)

EL PASO -- The Sheriff's Office on Wednesday busted a gasoline theft ring that had set up a makeshift gas station where customers paid as low as \$1.40 a gallon, officials said.

Seven people were arrested in connection with stealing Pemex gasoline loaded onto tank trucks in El Paso and then selling it.

[Russia eyes 20 pct share of world LNG market - EconMin](#)

SALEKHARD, Russia (Russia) - Russia could increase its share in the world market for liquefied natural gas (LNG) to 20 percent and beyond in the long term, Economy Minister Elvira Nabiullina said on Thursday.

[We should try reducing home heating costs first](#)

A factor in the lower wholesale natural gas prices is decreased demand because of the recession and heightened energy consciousness. But because inexpensive natural gas may seem like a windfall for utility customers, it may provide a disincentive for turning down the thermostat.

Add to that the risk that consumers will believe energy no longer needs conservation. Because of the large natural gas deposits in shale basins primarily in Pennsylvania and surrounding states, energy economists now say the U.S. natural gas reserves are 35 percent larger than previously thought.

With news like that, it will be easy to start thinking that the crisis has passed. The warnings about exhaustible resources and overdependence on foreign energy could quickly seem like an unpleasant phase we went through, sort of like white shoes and leisure suits.

[Viet Nam pushes for nuclear power](#)

HCM CITY — Viet Nam's growing energy needs and the looming global energy crisis make the country's interest in nuclear power generation, experts said yesterday.

Local energy officials, financiers and experts from the Independent Power Producers Forum (IPPF) have gathered in HCM City for a two-day meeting to discuss the power situation in Viet Nam and plans for the country's future nuclear power plants in the central province of Ninh Thuan.

[Driving nuclear energy with proton accelerators](#)

The global demand for electricity is likely to double by 2030, according to the World

Nuclear Association. But could particle accelerator technology help solve the world energy crisis?

According to scientists, accelerators might make it possible to use an alternative fuel to produce nuclear energy.

[Nuclear fuel wins carbon exemption - for now](#)

Processing of nuclear fuel has been granted an exemption from European Union (EU) plans to auction carbon dioxide emissions permits from 2013, although the exemption list will be reviewed before 2010.

[China starts building next phase of oil reserve](#)

BEIJING (Reuters) - China has started building 5.4 million cubic metres of oil tanks at Dushanzi in Xinjiang in its far west as part of the second phase of strategic oil reserves, official Xinhua News agency reported on Thursday.

The project will cost 2.65 billion yuan (\$390 million) and will start with a first phase of 3 million cubic metres, which is due to be finished by July 2011, Xinhua said, citing officials speaking at the startup ceremony.

China finished filling the first phase of its strategic oil reserves at the end of last year and has said it plans to stock up on oil when prices are relatively low.

[A Look at Strategic Oil Reserves – Who's Buying Oil?](#)

So which countries are executing preparedness plans to fill their strategic reserves with \$70 oil now (as opposed to \$140+)?

[Crude Oil Falls a Second Day on Gains in U.S. Fuel Stockpiles](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Crude oil declined for a second day after a U.S. government report showed a larger-than-expected increase in fuel stockpiles in the world's largest energy-consuming nation.

Gasoline stockpiles in the U.S. surged 5.4 million barrels last week, the Energy Department said yesterday. That's more than the 500,000-barrel increase forecast in a Bloomberg News survey of analysts. Diesel and heating oil inventories jumped almost 3 million barrels, double what was expected, and crude oil stockpiles also climbed.

[Japan Oil, LNG Imports Fall on Power Demand, Weather](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Japan's oil and natural-gas imports fell in August because of lower energy demand from factories and as consumers switched off air conditioners because of cooler summer weather.

Japan shipped in 17.83 million kiloliters, or about 3.62 million barrels a day, of crude oil last month, down 12.4 percent from a year earlier, a preliminary finance ministry trade report released in Tokyo today shows. It was the 10th straight month of decline. Imports of liquefied natural gas fell 5.9 percent to 5.37 million metric tons.

[DNO Plunges as Trading Resumes Amid Kurdish Dispute](#)

(Bloomberg) -- DNO International ASA plunged in Oslo as trading resumed following a halt on Sept. 21 after the oil producer's operations were suspended in northern Iraq because of a dispute with the Kurdistan Regional Government.

The shares fell as much as 3.68 kroner, or 55 percent, to 2.98 kroner, and were at 3.54 kroner as of 11:33 a.m. local time. This week's slump has wiped out about 3.2 billion kroner (\$553 million) of the Oslo-based company's market value and erased gains for the year.

[Senate blocks bid to keep offshore drilling policy](#)

WASHINGTON — The Senate on Wednesday voted against an attempt by Republicans to keep in place a plan by the Bush administration to allow oil and gas drilling along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts.

The 56-42 vote killed a proposal by Sen. David Vitter, R-La., that would have blocked the Obama administration from pursuing its own policy on offshore drilling.

[Chevron seeks Ecuador liability in pollution case](#)

SAN RAMON, Calif. — Chevron Corp. sought Wednesday to force Ecuador into international arbitration for alleged trade violations, an apparent effort to protect itself against a feared negative ruling in a \$27 billion lawsuit over environmental damage.

[Ecuador Judge Told by Court to Stay on Chevron Case](#)

(Bloomberg) -- The Ecuadorean judge who stepped down from a \$27 billion environmental lawsuit against Chevron Corp. after the company accused him of bias should remain in charge of the case, a court in Ecuador ruled.

A request by Judge Juan Nunez to recuse himself from the Chevron lawsuit was “unfounded,” Judge Nicolas Zambrano said in a ruling yesterday. Like Nunez, Zambrano sits on the Nueva Loja Superior Court in Ecuador’s northeastern Sucumbios province.

[Indonesia's Cepu must reach peak output on time - watchdog](#)

JAKARTA (Reuters) - Indonesia's oil watchdog has urged Exxon Mobil to ensure crude oil production from Cepu block peaks on schedule, in 2012, or else it may lose the right to operate the block, an official said on Thursday.

[Global Oil Companies Cut Fuel Shipments to Iran, WSJ Reports](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Oil companies have reduced fuel exports to Iran as the Middle Eastern country may face sanctions because of its nuclear program, the Wall Street Journal said, citing traders it didn't name.

BP Plc has stopped shipments to Iran at least six months ago, the newspaper said, quoting an unnamed person familiar with the matter. Total SA would stop gasoline exports to Iran if the U.S. and other European nations call for a halt on fuel exports, it said, citing a company official.

[China says pressure won't help Iran nuclear solution](#)

BEIJING (Reuters) – Stepping up pressure on Iran was not an effective way to persuade the country to halt its nuclear programme, Beijing said on Thursday, even as China joined other major powers to demand a "serious response" from Tehran.

[Naftogaz of Ukraine Gets State Permission to Sell Bonds Abroad](#)

(Bloomberg) -- NAK Naftogaz Ukrainy, the Ukrainian state-run energy company that's seeking to restructure its foreign debt, got permission from the State Stock and Securities Commission to sell bonds abroad.

[No fuel like an old fuel](#)

Government efforts to change our energy usage through mandates and subsidies don't succeed. Meanwhile, fossil fuels defy dire predictions of their demise.

[Our view on taxing air travelers: Ticket taxes get diverted to fund tiny airfields](#)

Every frequent flier knows how irritating air travel can be these days: long lines, cramped seats, extra fees for just about everything, and assorted government charges that drive up the cost of a typical \$250 roundtrip ticket by 16%.

What most passengers don't realize, however, is that a wildly disproportionate amount of taxes they're paying for airport improvements goes to more than 2,800 fields across the USA that they'll never use. Unless, of course, they fly on the private planes that these small fields serve.

[Opposing view: Small airports benefit all](#)

Surveys tell us people view general aviation as an important part of our national transportation system. But, we also know GA is not well understood. It comprises all flying except scheduled airlines and the military. That means law enforcement, firefighting, air ambulance, search-and-rescue, traffic reporting, package delivery and more fit under the "general aviation" banner. In short, GA provides services that millions of Americans and thousands of American businesses rely on every day.

Just as highways crisscross the nation, serving small towns and big cities, so the nation's more than 5,000 public-use airports link communities of all sizes. Commercial air carriers serve fewer than 150 of those airports. That's like having a highway system that connects only the country's 150 largest cities.

[The 50 people who matter today: 31-40](#)

The Cambridge physicist David J C MacKay used £10,000 of his own money to publish *Sustainable Energy: Without the Hot Air*, which, thanks largely to a word-of-mouth campaign that had it circulating like ecological samizdat, very quickly entered Amazon's top 60 bestsellers. (It is also available as a free download from MacKay's website.)

Much of MacKay's research has been in the field of information theory, neural networks and software development. Among the many achievements that earned him a professorship in 2003 and election to the Royal Society this year is Dasher, a data-entry interface that enables disabled people to use computers. But *Sustainable Energy* is the reason MacKay really matters, and the reason he has just been appointed chief scientific adviser to the Department of Energy and Climate Change.

[Study: 1 in 3 homes in metro areas could pose health risks](#)

One in three homes in U.S. metropolitan areas have at least one problem such as water leaks, peeling paint, holes or rodents that could harm residents' health or safety, according to a first-of-its-kind study to be released Thursday.

"The sheer numbers of homes impacted are alarming," says Rebecca Morley, executive director of the National Center for Healthy Housing, a non-profit research group that used Census Bureau data for the study.

[Winners of ResilientCity.org Competition offer fresh ideas about reshaping cities for a resilient future](#)

The winner, From the Ground Up, from by Michael Haggerty, of Brooklyn, NY, USA, examined how to turn the low density residential suburb of Newark, New Jersey into a higher density, mixed-use, self sufficient re-localized neighbourhood. According to the jury, "The winner did a good job of understanding all the principles of resiliency, and presented them in a highly legible fashion. The solutions used cultural, social and economic elements needed to integrate a new food supply source into an economically viable model."

[Mirkarimi holds peak oil hearing](#)

Will Supervisor Ross Mirkarimi forge ahead with recommendations in a [125-page peak oil report](#)?

The Board of Supervisors' Government Audit and Oversight Committee is scheduled to hold a 1 p.m. hearing Thursday at City Hall, Room 250, on the peak oil task force report.

[Review of Mobility 21 Conference](#)

While the morning session had mostly been realpolitik, the mood altered at this point as the keynote speaker brought starry eyed idealism to the fore. This was Christopher Steiner, author of the new book *\$20 per Gallon*. Frankly he gave a very self indulgent and rather smug talk. Steiner came off an enormously taken with himself for his insight of oil depletion being inevitable as if that alone makes him a great genius and by hearing him we too are now ahead of our sadly uninformed fellow humans who don't know about... Well, Steiner really never made it all that clear what the coming of peak oil etc. really meant beyond that high gas prices would have some kind of dire consequences. But what these social and economic impacts might be was something he provided not even a hint about. Maybe his book has the answers, but based on his talk I was not all that interested in buying it. It was really one long narcissistic monologue, and not even all that interesting of one.

[Spain: Israel team out of contest over West Bank](#)

MADRID – Spain said Wednesday it disqualified Israeli academics from a solar power design competition because their university is in the West Bank, the latest in a series of low-level European sanctions against Israel over its settlement policy.

[Japan Must Boost Nuclear Use to Meet Climate Target](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Japan must increase dependence on nuclear-power to meet Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama's target for cutting carbon emissions, a senior trade ministry official said in Tokyo today.

The government's previous target of boosting nuclear output to as much as 40 percent of all generation "may not be enough," said Yosuke Kondo, parliamentary secretary for the trade ministry. Kondo, 44, declined to specify a new target.

[E.ON Says Wave Power Won't Be Commercial Before 2015](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Commercial-scale wave or tidal energy projects are unlikely to be used before 2015, according to Germany's E.ON AG, because the costs are two to three times higher than conventional sources.

"We'd like to see a small-scale wave energy plant by 2015," said Amaan Lafayette, manager of U.K. marine development for E.ON, Germany's biggest utility. "This is a 2020 marketplace," he said in an interview in Edinburgh yesterday.

[Bidders revealed for UK offshore wind power links](#)

LONDON (Reuters) - Ofgem has selected 13 companies to bid for the ownership and operation of nine British offshore wind connection assets, with a combined value of 1.15 billion pounds (\$1.89 billion), the regulator said on Wednesday.

[German Power Falls to Six-Month Low as Emissions Extend Decline](#)

(Bloomberg) -- German electricity for delivery next year fell to its lowest in more than six months as emission permits extended declines, reducing production costs at utilities burning fossil fuels to generate power.

['Green' roofs may help put lid on global warming](#)

"Green" roofs, those increasingly popular urban rooftops covered with plants, could help fight global warming, scientists in Michigan are reporting. The scientists found that replacing traditional roofing materials in an urban area the size of Detroit, with a population of about one-million, with green would be equivalent to eliminating a year's worth of carbon dioxide emitted by 10,000 mid-sized SUVs and trucks.

[Gore: Climate change laws 'crucial step' in crisis](#)

NEW YORK — Former Vice President Al Gore told attendees Wednesday at the Clinton Global Initiative to reach out to U.S. senators and urge them to pass climate change legislation, saying it was the "crucial step" in solving the climate crisis.

[Is China Turning Into the Climate Change Good Guy?](#)

The U.S. entered this week's round of climate negotiations as the global bad guy, a holdover from eight years of barely veiled contempt for the process from former President George W. Bush's Administration. But China wasn't far behind. The world's biggest country is now its biggest carbon emitter, and its sheer rate of economic expansion — fueled chiefly by polluting coal — ensures China won't lose that spot any time soon. While the U.S. earned the world's antipathy for refusing to sign onto the Kyoto Protocol, China, as a developing nation, had no requirements under that pact — and rarely seemed interested in stepping up to its responsibilities within the UN climate change process. While the standoff between the U.S. and China — over who needed to cut carbon emissions and who needed to pay for it — has been the main reason behind the deadlock in global climate negotiations over the past few years, both countries deserved blame for failing to take the lead internationally.

[Antarctic coastal ice thinning surprises experts](#)

OSLO (Reuters) — Scientists are surprised at how extensively coastal ice in Antarctica and Greenland is thinning, according to a study Wednesday that could help predict rising sea levels linked to climate change.

Analysis of millions of NASA satellite laser images showed the biggest loss of ice was caused by glaciers speeding up when they flowed into the sea, according to scientists at the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) and Bristol University.

"We were surprised to see such a strong pattern of thinning glaciers across such large areas of coastline -- it's widespread and in some cases thinning extends hundreds of kilometers inland," said Hamish Pritchard of BAS who led the study.

[El Nino shift could boost hurricanes, droughts: study](#)

PARIS — Global warming periodically shifts El Nino thousands of miles to the west, potentially intensifying Asian droughts and weakening its dampening effect on Atlantic hurricanes, reports a study published Thursday.



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