



Econbrowser on Oil Shale

Posted by [Stuart Staniford](#) on September 28, 2005 - 6:46am

Topic: [Supply/Production](#)

Econbrowser [discusses Oil Shale](#), and is starting to sound like at any moment he might break down and join our Draft Roscoe for President campaign :-). (snippets under the fold...)

The fact that large quantities of heat are required to obtain a usable fuel from the rock means that this is a far less efficient source of energy than conventional oil. Shell claims it can produce 3.5 units of energy for every unit input, though one wonders whether the energy content of all the inputs is taken into account in such figures. The lower this ratio, the more the cost of producing oil from shale would rise as energy prices go up. Another implication of the high energy needs for processing is that significantly more greenhouse gases are released per barrel of usable fuel produced. Concerns about greenhouse emissions appear to have been the basis on which Greenpeace succeeded in closing down the Australian demonstration plant.

and

Despite these misgivings, I believe that the applications that BLM has received for oil shale demonstration projects should be approved and pursued aggressively. Given these lead times, we certainly need to be developing the ability to exploit this resource, if need be. Bad as this option is, I'm not certain that we have anything better. But unlike the enthusiastic supporters of oil shale, my hope is that we never have to rely on it.



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