



Drumbeat: February 27, 2010

Posted by [Leanan](#) on February 27, 2010 - 9:21am

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[Nuclear Reactors, Dams at Risk Due to Global Warming](#)

As climate change throws Earth's water cycle off-kilter, the world's energy infrastructure may end up in hot water, experts say.

From hydropower installations in the Himalaya to nuclear power plants in Western Europe, energy resources are already being impacted by flooding, heat waves, drought, and more.

Traditionally power plants and energy facilities have been built for the long haul—the circa-1936 Hoover Dam in Nevada is still a major hydroelectric generator.

But in a rapidly warming world, a site that looks ideal when it's built may be in a much different environment 50 years later. For instance, a facility built on permafrost in the Arctic may collapse due to the melting tundra.

1">Oil Comfortable Around \$80, But Will Demand Rise?

Nobuo Tanaka, head of the International Energy Agency noted Friday that so far this year, the global economic recovery has yet to strengthen demand for oil.

"Demand numbers have not been as strong as the macro economists say the economic recovery has been," the IEA executive director said in an interview with Dow Jones Newswires.

Newsom, however, believes that demand could potentially accelerate during the upcoming driving season, slated to begin at the end of May and peak in the summer months from June-July.

[Saudi oil drilling to be stable in 2010](#)

Drilling for oil in top oil exporter Saudi Arabia in 2010 is expected to remain the same as last year, industry sources said on Saturday, but state oil giant Aramco would increase gas drilling activities.

Aramco's focus on gas came as the kingdom continues to step up efforts to meet soaring gas demand and after it completed last year a crude expansion project to boost output capacity to 12 million barrels per day (bpd).

"We see it (oil drilling) stable. We are not increasing, we are not dropping. We are trying to maintain around 100 rigs for the rest of the year," one source said.

[Chevron Secures Shale Exploration Rights in Poland](#)

In a filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission Thursday, Chevron, the second-largest U.S. oil company, confirmed that it has secured exploration rights for an additional Polish shale gas concession, although the size of the acreage was not divulged.

[A Confucian Mess: Natural Gas Pricing in China](#)

China has a stated goal of increasing its natural gas consumption. But gas only accounts for less than 3% of the country's primary energy consumption while coal provides more than 70%, a share not seen in the West since the nineteenth century. The paltry gas consumption in China is miniscule even compared to primary consumption levels in Asia and around the world. Gas accounts for about 8.8% of primary energy use in Asia and for about 24% of total energy worldwide.

[Analysis: Caribbean Contributes Natural Gas](#)

The Caribbean is not just the birthplace of the steelpan, a beach vacation destination, and home of a spectacular Carnival celebration. The Caribbean islands are also working toward energy independence; however today the islands are predominantly net energy importers.

[Environmentalists question coal's place in Obama policy](#)

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama, a longtime believer in "clean coal," is launching an ambitious and expensive plan to help the energy industry lock climate-changing gases from coal-fired power plants deep underground.

[The Dirty Truth Behind Clean Coal](#)

If you've tuned in to the Winter Olympics this past week, you likely sat through repeated showings of a multimillion-dollar public relations campaign paid for by Big Coal regarding the potential laurels of "clean-coal" technology. The premise of the 30-second spot is simple: Coal can be clean and America needs to wean itself off of foreign crude and create jobs back home by tapping our nation's vast coal reserves.

[Solar power's amazing rise](#)

Think solar panels are relics of Jimmy Carter's White House? Actually, attempts to harness the sun's energy date to the Romans, who warmed bathhouses with sunlight streaming through large and strategically placed southern windows. But it was fear of coal shortages in the late 19th and early 20th centuries that fueled interest in solar technology.

[Building green](#)

GERMANY—The concept of green buildings started in the 1970s, when the energy crisis and environment pollution became a concern of everybody. Originally, green buildings were built out of the need and desire for more energy-efficient and environment-friendly construction practices. There are a number of motives to building green, including environmental, economic and social benefits. Also known as sustainable design, this concept integrates the building an environment using green practices employed with a design purpose.

[Water fallout: Utah's first nuclear plant won't float without water rights](#)

The Green River proposal has sparked intense skepticism. Critics ask where the funding will come from, where the electricity will go, and, of course, what will happen to the waste. But the first hurdle is more immediate. In the Utah desert, this possible climate change solution is colliding with one of its projected consequences: water scarcity.

[Alternate Reality Game 'EVOKE' Uses Gamers to Change the World](#)

To hear exactly what "EVOKE" entails is to immediately be struck by the scope of the venture. It's at once a pie-in-the-sky project based around empowering people to make positive changes to the world around them, but based around social gaming conventions to lure in people familiar with online games. "EVOKE" is like "World of Warcraft," but instead of vanquishing orcs you're fighting hunger; instead of raiding dark dungeons, groups band together to solve the energy crisis. If it sounds like a game with an agenda, that's because it is.

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[Oil settles near \\$80 a barrel again](#)

NEW YORK – Oil prices hit \$80 a barrel Friday to end a wild trading week that saw prices swing in the opposite direction every day.

Crude barrels have wavered between \$70 and \$80 all year, and the latest batch of economic reports failed to give a clear picture of when energy demand in the U.S. would pick up.

[TNK-BP Seeks 'Game Changing' Unconventional Gas in East Europe](#)

(Bloomberg) -- BP Plc's Russian venture, TNK-BP, is considering unconventional gas opportunities in eastern Europe, as hard-to-extract deposits start to "make sense" with available technology and pricing conditions.

"That's a game changer," Chief Operating Officer Bill Schrader said in an interview. "It will have an impact globally. As economic activity recovers, that gas will be developed."

[Petrobras project sticks to schedule](#)

Despite recent economic headwinds that forced some rivals to retrench, Petrobras remains on track to launch its biggest project ever in the U.S. in coming months, a senior official with Brazil's state-owned oil company said Friday.

Petrobras, keeping with its original timeline, is set to begin producing oil by mid-2010 from two ultradeep- water fields in the Gulf of Mexico known as Cascade and Chinook, said Cesar Palagi, a Gulf of Mexico asset manager for the company.

[Mexico Aims to Produce 3.3 Million Oil Barrels Daily by 2024](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Mexico's government aims to boost oil production to 3.3 million barrels a day by 2024, the Energy Ministry said.

[Western Oil Companies Feel the Heat in Kazakhstan](#)

A consortium of Western oil companies developing a huge natural-gas field in Kazakhstan was slapped with a \$21 million fine Friday, the latest step in a pressure campaign that is raising concern among investors in the oil-rich Central Asian state.

The move, against the group developing a field called Karachaganak, is reminiscent of tactics deployed by Russia, which also used penalties and investigations to coerce Western oil majors into giving state companies stakes in their projects.

[Nabucco Gas Link to Europe May Secure Turkmen Supply by April](#)

(Bloomberg) -- The Nabucco pipeline, conceived to bring natural gas to Europe via Turkey from around the Caspian Sea, may clinch a supply contract with Turkmenistan in April, a partner in the negotiations said.

[As Clock Ticks, Nuclear Plant Searches for Leak](#)

VERNON, Vt. — At Vermont Yankee, a nuclear reactor on the ropes, the search for a tritium leak that may doom the plant is proceeding as quickly as possible — which is to say, at a painstaking pace.

[Managing Peak Demand With Water Heaters](#)

Most programs for reducing peak electricity demand involve air-conditioners or (in farm states) irrigation. In Idaho, for example, the main power company pays homeowners to allow their air-conditioners to be cycled on and off in 15-minute intervals during some summer afternoons, and farmers are paid to turn off their water pumps during those times.

Water heaters can also be set up to reduce strain on the power system. Dan Tepfer, who works on “demand response” issues for the Kandiyohi Power Cooperative, a small utility in central Minnesota, said that customers are paid \$12.50 per month to take part in a program that allows the water heaters to use electricity only at night — between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m. During those hours, the utility has plenty of spare electric capacity — unlike the daytime, when people run their computers and dishwashers and other gadgets.

[How Will Global Warming Affect Regional Climates?](#)

While much attention has been given to the potential global impact of climate change, less has been paid to how a warmer planet would affect regional climates. The

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) projects that the global average temperature will rise about 1°C by the middle of the century, but the global average does not tell us anything about what will happen to regional climates, for example rainfall in the western United States or Hawaiian Islands.

[Supply and Demand: Climate study looks at risks to water source](#)

Water managers and scientists tracking climate change said Friday that they hope a new \$2 million study will produce strategies for dealing with Southern Nevada's primary water source on the Colorado River if supply dwindles and demand increases during the next 50 years.

The two-year study, which is under way, will look at risks to the supply if temperatures continue to increase as they have in the past decade, said Terry Fulp, the Bureau of Reclamation's deputy regional director for the Lower Colorado Region. The study is funded by the bureau and the seven Colorado River Basin states.

[The US Chamber of Commerce: A record of obstruction on climate action](#)

In 1883, New York faced an environmental crisis, but intervention from the city's Chamber of Commerce led to the creation of the Adirondack Park - a move that is a far cry from the US Chamber of Commerce today.

[Most Credible Climate Skeptic Not So Credible After All](#)

Patrick Michaels has more credibility than your average climate skeptic. Unlike some of the kookier characters that populate the small world of climate denialists—like Lord Christopher Monckton, a sometime adviser to Margaret Thatcher who claims that "We are a carbon-starved planet," or H. Leighton Steward, a retired oil executive and author of a best-selling diet book who argues that carbon dioxide is "green"—Michaels is actually a bona fide climate scientist. As such, he's often quoted by reporters as a reasonable expert who argues that global warming has been overhyped. But what Michaels doesn't mention in his frequent media appearances is his history of receiving money from big polluters.



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