



Drumbeat: April 3, 2010

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Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[Tesoro Blast Shows Pattern of Refinery Safety Problems, Investigator Says](#)

(Bloomberg) -- A blast and fire that killed five people at Tesoro Corp.'s Anacortes, Washington, refinery yesterday may be the worst fatal accident to strike a U.S. refinery since a 2005 explosion killed 15 people at BP Plc's plant in Texas City, Texas.

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sumption inevitably leads to drilling more wells in Nigerian villages, soon to be followed by spills, poverty, violence, and worse. If an oil company spills even a small amount of oil off the coast of Virginia the active citizens of the Commonwealth will force them to account for their actions and pay compensation.

[Offshore Drilling's Payoff May Not Be Energy](#)

This week, President Obama ended a ban on oil and gas drilling along some parts of the U.S. Atlantic coast and northern Alaska. His decision has staggered some of the president's own environmental supporters, but others say the decision is necessary to help decrease U.S. dependence on foreign oil or win bipartisan support for an energy and climate change bill. Host Scott Simon speaks with energy mogul T. Boone Pickens, who has pushed for more investment in alternative energy sources.

[U.S. Rep. Frank Pallone, N.J. environmentalists campaign against offshore drilling](#)

U.S. Rep Frank Pallone and New Jersey environmentalists are promising a grass-roots campaign to fight what they say is President Barack Obama's "ill-advised" policy to allow oil drilling off the Atlantic coast.

"We call upon the president, by executive order, to issue a moratorium and put the Atlantic coast off limits," Pallone (D-6th Dist.) said during a gathering today along the boardwalk in Belmar, overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. "I cannot and will not support what I consider a really backward way of looking at the energy crisis."

[FACTBOX - Venezuela development plan for Orinoco oil belt](#)

(Reuters) - Russian companies and Venezuela will invest between \$60 million and \$80 million this year in the Junin 6 block in Venezuela's vast Orinoco heavy crude belt, a senior Russian oil executive said on Friday.

[Executive charged in Pemex fuel case](#)

SAN ANTONIO — A San Antonio business executive is the latest person to be charged in a case of \$2 million in fuel stolen from Mexican giant Pemex that was resold in the United States.

Federal court records unsealed this week show Tim Brink, CEO of Continental Fuels, was charged in January with conspiracy to acquire petroleum that Mexican officials believe was stolen from Pemex by the Zetas, a cartel that has since broken away from the Gulf Cartel and entered into new lines of criminal activity.

[N.Y. Auto Show Is Rife With Lithe Energy Savers](#)

There was no shortage of news surrounding reduced energy consumption during the press conferences at the 2010 New York International Auto Show. Even Infiniti's new 8-passenger QX56 SUV gets 20 mpg on the highway. Among the many product introductions and company announcements, Ford, Hyundai and Chevy stood out with notable strides in vehicle efficiency and forward thinking technology partnerships.

[Economists Warn against Setting Price for Carbon Too Low](#)

In its first attempts to regulate carbon emissions, the U.S. government is hindering its own efforts by using flawed economic models that grossly underestimate the impact of carbon dioxide (CO₂) on the climate and on our economic future, says a new report issued today by America's largest network of independent climate economists.

The report, from the Economics for Equity and the Environment Network (E3 Network), an organization of more than 200 economists, shows how a little-known federal task force has estimated the so-called "social cost of carbon" – the economic impact of each ton of CO₂ emissions – at a "central value" of \$21 per ton, which would translate to about 20 cents per gallon of gasoline.

[Finland to open, scan household letters and send copies by email](#)

Finland's postal service is to begin opening household mail and sending scanned copies of letters by email to cut costs and pollution. Not even the most intimate love letters, paystips, overdue bills and other personal messages will be spared under the controversial scheme.

[Post-Peak Oil Reality Trumps Right Wing Trend](#)

Now the post-peak oil age is staring us in the face, with the Great Recession signaling the end of bubble prosperity. There is no consensus on how things will play out -- whether a Depression, total collapse or prosperous green technotopia -- or when.

However, many of us know that the end of cheap, abundant oil means a new chapter of history is opening up now or very soon. More and more authorities are acknowledging an imminent peak in oil extraction or a major oil-supply crunch. The "optimistic" and contrary view out of Exxon is becoming marginalized. Since "peak oilists" understand that the new chapter has begun, and we can visualize energy scarcity causing radical change in lifestyle and social structure, isn't it time to place the traditional left-right view of politics and conventional economic theory aside? Today's political conflict is dominated by those who see a constant or growing pie to fight over or redistribute. Their worldview will be swept aside when everyone from neo-Nazis to peaceniks have their cars permanently idled, without fuel, and have to dig up lawns and depave driveways to desperately grow food.

[Bill McKibben: The Only Way to Have a Cow](#)

The key technology here is the single-strand electric fence—you move your herd or your flock once or twice a day from one small pasture to the next, forcing them to eat everything that's growing there but moving them along before they graze all the good stuff down to bare ground. Now their manure isn't a problem that fills a cesspool, but a key part of making the system work. Done right, some studies suggest, this method of raising cattle could put much of the atmosphere's oversupply of greenhouse gases back in the soil inside half a century. That means shifting from feedlot farming to rotational grazing is one of the few changes we could make that's on the same scale as the problem of global warming. It won't do away with the need for radically cutting emissions, but it could help get the car exhaust you emitted back in high school out of the atmosphere.

[How green is your dating life?](#)

Can your dating life go green, too?

Eco-compatibility is increasingly more important for people navigating the dating scene. Therapists are seeing an increase in environmentally related disputes among couples, The New York Times reported in January.

[Putting a Price Tag on the Melting Ice Caps](#)

Reports about the melting ice caps are distressing, but for the most part climate change remains abstract. The poor polar bear has been trotted out as the tangible face of global warming so often that we're beginning to see "polar bear fatigue." How about bringing the effects of Arctic melt close to home, as in what it will cost? A new study does just that, and the results are alarming, not just for Arctic dwellers but for all of us. According to lead author Eban Goodstein, Ph.D., over the next 40 years Arctic ice melt will take an economic toll of between \$2.4 trillion and \$24 trillion. Unless we change course — and fast.

Why is the melting Arctic so expensive? "The Arctic acts as the planet's air conditioner, and that function is already breaking down," says Goodstein, an economist and Director of the Bard Center for Environmental Policy. The high price reflects anticipated losses in agriculture and real estate plus the cost of disease outbreaks and natural disasters associated with rising sea levels. The melt, he says, is already adding extra heat at an annual rate of 3 billion tons of CO₂ — the equivalent of 500 coal-powered plants, or more than 40% of all U.S. fossil fuel emissions — and this is expected to more than double by the end of the century.

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[Tesoro Refinery Blast May Boost Local Fuel Prices](#)

(Bloomberg) -- A blast and fire at Tesoro Corp.'s Anacortes, Washington, refinery early today may boost regional fuel prices.

[Crude oil flowing for first time in new Alberta Clipper pipeline](#)

The 1000 mile long Alberta Clipper pipeline connecting Alberta, Canada to Superior started flowing with crude oil Thursday. Mike Simonson reports.

This doesn't mean the pipeline is full of crude oil yet. Enbridge Energy Pipeline's Denise Hamsher says it'll take at least five months to creep its way to their Superior facility.

[Russian Oil Production Rises to Post-Soviet Record](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Russia, supplier of about 12 percent of the world's oil, increased crude production in March to a post-Soviet record as TNK-BP tapped deposits and OAO Bashneft's new owners squeezed more crude from older fields.

Crude output reached 10.12 million barrels a day, a gain of 3.3 percent from the same month last year and 0.4 percent from February, according to preliminary data released today by the Energy Ministry's CDU-TEK unit. Exports rose 3 percent on the month to 5.38 million barrels a day.

"I think we're going to see this continuing this year," Artem Konchin, an oil and gas analyst at Unicredit SpA in Moscow, said by phone.

[Chris Nelder: Officials Wake Up to Peak Oil](#)

When I began writing about peak oil professionally in 2006, it was generally considered a tinfoil hat theory. The notion that oil production might peak around 2012 (plus or minus) was only taken seriously by a few analysts who were considered extremely pessimistic.

Official forecasts had no cognizance of it whatsoever. All were confident that oil supply would continue to grow steadily to 130 million barrels per day (mbpd) and beyond, at prices that would be considered astoundingly cheap by today's standards. Oil companies rarely mentioned peak oil, and when they did, it was in a casually dismissive way.

But as time marched on, the cornucopian arguments fell one by one. My longtime readers have seen the story unfold, but for the benefit of new readers, here's a quick summary...

[New mileage rules move industry a long way in right direction](#)

The Obama administration's most recent foray into mileage standards for vehicles will pay off if it deters California and other states from venturing off on their own. That in itself justifies the goals announced Thursday, which cover the years 2012-16.

[The New EPA Fuel Standards: Why MPG No Longer Matters](#)

I love the ambitious new automobile efficiency targets set by the EPA this week. This is long overdue. As the EPA pointed out, "transportation sources accounted for 28 percent of all U.S. greenhouse gas emissions in 2007, and have been the fastest-growing source of U.S. GHG emissions since 1990."

While the new targets works out to an average of 35.5 MPG by 2016, the rules are actually set in terms of "grams of CO₂ per mile." I suspect that it was done this way because of the EPA's new found authority to regulate CO₂, but it also highlights that "miles per gallon" is not all that matters when it comes to climate change.

[Awareness to help turn grey Kuwait to green](#)

This tiny oil-rich country has the potential for providing massive renewable energy sources, but what it lacks is professional departments dedicated to dealing with this in any ministry, not to mention any ministry specifically established to deal with these critical issues, even with the constant concerns over the possibility of subsequent oil shortages.

[A Race to Reap Energy From the Ocean Breezes](#)

As New Englanders await a decision in Massachusetts on a bitterly contested proposal to build the nation's first offshore wind farm, the State of Rhode Island is forging ahead with its own project in the hope of outpacing — and upstaging — its neighbor.

Crucial to its strategy is dispelling worries that economics will trump the environment, or the broader public good.

[Big Backyard? You Could Raise All Your Own Food, New Book Says](#)

Feed a family of four on a quarter- acre plot! Earn thousands in half the time a normal job would require!

But wait — there's more, as the late Billy Mays might have said. Never farmed before? Don't know an udder from a ukulele? Can't tell compost from a camera? Fear not! Just buy a copy of *Mini Farming: Self-Sufficiency on 1/4 Acre*, the brand-new book by Brett L. Markham, self-described advocate of a holistic approach to farming on a small, sustainable scale.

[Media works toward a green transition](#)

Sari and Pat Steuber live in a house they designed and built themselves, on a steep hillside on the outskirts of Media. Light floods the interior through south-facing double-glass windows. The house is heated by a system that captures the warmth of the earth. A three-story staircase is supported by long strands of rebar; the treads are recycled sections of finished maple from a bowling alley lane.

In 2008, Sari, 61, a retired software-development manager, and Pat, 64, a retired Web

designer, decided to rectify an omission: They'd been married 22 years and never taken a honeymoon. So they spent the next 6-1/2 months touring the United States. They didn't rent a Winnebago. Instead, they mounted a tandem bicycle and pedaled 9,000 miles.

[After a 20-Year Mapping Effort, Hoping to Save Dozens of Native Plants](#)

American colonists once watched for the spring bloom of the Nantucket shadbush, a sign that it was warm enough to bury the winter's dead.

Today, that shadbush and dozens of other flora native to the New York region face extinction, a result of urban development and the encroachment of invasive plants from foreign lands, scientists from the Brooklyn Botanic Garden report.

Hoping to revive the plants, the scientists recently completed a 20-year project mapping species in every county within a 50-mile radius of New York, providing detailed information on the health of more than 15,000 native and nonnative species.

[German film offers answers to Gore climate concerns](#)

(Reuters) - Al Gore raised some alarming questions about climate change in his Oscar-winning 2006 film "An Inconvenient Truth" that a German filmmaker has now tried to provide some answers for in a new documentary.

Carl Fechner's "The Fourth Revolution - Energy Autonomy" is an attempt to show how the world could be getting all its energy from renewable sources in 30 years -- and help slow the climate change that Gore warned about in his blockbuster film.

An unabashedly provocative look at renewable energy in countries from the United States, Germany, Denmark, China, Mali and Bangladesh, Fechner's new film has attracted rave reviews and fierce criticism in Germany since it opened last week.

[Orbeo Raises Forecast of Excess EU CO2 Permits After 2009 Data](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Orbeo raised its forecast of excess carbon-dioxide permits in the current phase of the European Union's cap-and-trade program by 72 percent after emissions fell more than estimated last year.

[Weird science: Consider geoengineering to fight global warming](#)

Intentionally messing with the world's climate sounds like something only a comic book villain would do.

But in March, at an unprecedented conference in northern California, a group of climate scientists and officials from several countries met to discuss how best to go about doing it.

[Native Peoples Reject Market Mechanisms](#)

SAN JOSÉ - Solutions to global warming based on the logic of the market are a threat to the rights and way of life of indigenous peoples, the Latin American Indigenous Forum on Climate Change concluded this week in Costa Rica.

[Bjørn Lomborg: Feel-good Earth Hour not answer to global warming](#)

What ever else it may be, Earth Hour is surely one of the most successful publicity stunts ever dreamed up. First organized in Sydney, Australia, in 2007 by the local chapter of the World Wildlife Fund, its popularity and the level of participation (both individual and official) that generates has exploded in recent years -- to the point that there is barely a corner of the earth that the campaign hasn't touched. As Greg Bourne, CEO of World Wildlife Fund in Australia, put it: "We have everyone from Casablanca to the safari camps of Namibia and Tanzania taking part."

But has Earth Hour actually done anything to halt -- or even slow -- global warming? Not so much.

[CO2 top concern for state Geological Survey, new director says](#)

The new head of the Illinois Geological Survey says finding ways to store carbon dioxide underground is a top priority if greenhouse gases are to be curbed.

[How methane leaks through permafrost](#)

Recently a team from Russia, the US, and Sweden found that the East Siberian Arctic Shelf (ESAS) is releasing around 8 teragrams of methane from subsea sediments each year. Now team member Natalia Shakhova and colleague Dmitry Nicolsky have come up with a new model for the Dmitry Laptev Strait region of the shelf to explain exactly how the methane is escaping through the permafrost layer above it.



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