



## Drumbeat: August 27, 2010

Posted by [Leanan](#) on August 27, 2010 - 9:18am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

### [Wind Turbine Projects Run Into Resistance](#)

BARSTOW, Calif. — The United States military has found a new menace hiding here in the vast emptiness of the Mojave Desert in California: wind turbines.

Moving turbine blades can be indistinguishable from airplanes on many radar systems, and they can even cause blackout zones in which planes disappear from radar entirely. Clusters of wind turbines, which can reach as high as 400 feet, look very similar to storm activity on weather radar, making it harder for air traffic controllers to give accurate weather information to pilots.

Although the military says no serious incidents have yet occurred because of the interference, the wind turbines pose an unacceptable risk to training, testing and national security in certain regions, Dr. Dorothy Robyn, deputy under secretary of defense, recently told a House Armed Services subcommittee.

Because of its concerns, the Defense Department has emerged as a formidable opponent of wind projects in direct conflict with another branch of the federal government, the Energy Department, which is spending billions of dollars on wind projects as part of President Obama's broader effort to promote renewable energy.

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as prices due to the dire state of its economy. In 2009 a pricing row between the two governments led to cuts in gas supplies to Europe.

### [Kazakhstan pumping up the volume](#)

Kazakhstan may exceed its oil output target this year on the back of higher oil production from a Chevron-led venture, the head of Kazakh state company said today.

### [Rosneft near deal for German refinery stakes-WSJ](#)

(Reuters) - Russian state-run oil company Rosneft is in "advanced negotiations" to gain stakes in four German refineries by purchasing a 50 percent stake in Ruhr Oel from Venezuela's state-run PDVSA, the Wall Street Journal reported on Friday.

### [Shell reopens Nigeria oil flowstations after protest](#)

(Reuters) - Royal Dutch Shell said on Friday it had reopened two oil flowstations in Nigeria's Niger Delta shut down two days ago due to a protest by local women over a lack of development in their community.

### [Chalmette refinery to shut 3 units - sources](#)

HOUSTON (Reuters) - Exxon Mobil Corp's 196,000 barrel per day (bpd) joint-venture Chalmette, Louisiana, refinery will shut three secondary units in a reconfiguration planned to save between \$8 million and \$9 million per month, according to sources familiar with the plans.

### [America No Longer the Place to Play Gasoline - Look Abroad](#)

Despite boasting just 5% of the global population, the United States goes through 25% of the world's oil every year. That startling statistic is no secret – and it's entirely understandable. After all, much of it relates to Americans' love affair with their automobiles – one that dates back well over 100 years. And our gas-dependent ways have only increased over the past 15 years or so with the increasing popularity of large, powerful cars, SUVs and trucks.

But the recession hit the auto industry hard. Truck and SUV-loving consumers drifted away from dealerships in droves. And the recession has dragged gasoline prices down, too.

Today, U.S. gasoline usage is still languishing and prices are trending lower. And while that's a big problem for one U.S. industry, in particular, the story is very different overseas. Let's take a look...

### ['Risk/reward equation' used in building gulf well, BP worker testifies](#)

A BP drilling engineer involved in the planning of the Macondo well declined to testify before a federal investigative panel Friday, invoking through his lawyer his Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination.

Mark Hafle, who was involved in some of the most heavily scrutinized decisions about the well, became the third BP employee to invoke his constitutional right not to answer questions from the panel. Hafle had testified in an earlier round of hearings.

### [Feinberg Challenged by State Attorneys General on BP Claims](#)

Kenneth Feinberg's effort to pick among claims on BP Plc's \$20 billion fund for victims of its oil spill has attracted a group of self-described watchdogs: attorneys general from affected Gulf Coast states.

"I'm certainly not going to give it my Good Housekeeping seal of approval," Mississippi Attorney General Jim Hood, a Democrat, said in an interview.

### [Construction of nuclear fuel-storage facility to begin](#)

TOKYO — The Economy, Trade and Industry Ministry's Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency on Friday gave the green light to the construction of a facility for storing spent nuclear fuel in Aomori Prefecture. The agency sanctioned Recyclable-Fuel Storage Co, set up by Tokyo Electric Power Co and Japan Atomic Power Co, to build the facility in the city of Mutsu to store spent nuclear fuel for about 50 years before reprocessing.

### [Prince Charles to install solar panels on his home](#)

Prince Charles, an ardent environmentalist, has received permission from the Westminster City Council to install solar panels on the roof of his 180-year-old home in London.

Once the panels are generating electricity, Clarence House will become "carbon negative," producing more power than it uses, *The Daily Telegraph* reports. It became "carbon neutral" three years ago.

### [Norway hydro can aid Europe move to renewables: IEA](#)

(Reuters) - The International Energy Agency said Norwegian hydropower could provide the reliable base Europe needs to invest in solar, wind and other renewable energy forms and urged Norway to expand cable links to other countries.

"Norway can help Europe introduce more volatile renewable energy sources into the market by providing a sustainable backup," said Nobuo Tanaka, the agency's executive director, in an interview on Friday at a renewable energy conference.

### [Organic food grows on acre of New York City rooftop](#)

Brooklyn Grange, an organic farming business, is using a 40,000 square-foot rooftop (nearly an acre) in Queens to grow hundreds of thousands of plants. Its website says tomatoes are one of its biggest crops but is also grows salad greens, herbs, carrots, fennel, beets, radishes and beans. It farms nine months of the year, using cover crops

like rye, buckwheat, vetch and clover in the winter.

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### [China: Farmland, water shortage may threaten grain output](#)

BEIJING - The growing shortage of farmland and water resources may prevent China from achieving its ambitious grain output targets in the next decade, warned both officials and experts.

Acute shortages of reserve farmland and water resources are now the main restraints for the country to ensure its food security, Zhang Ping, minister of the National Development and Reform Commission, said on Thursday while making a report to the top legislature.

### [Analysis: Gulf Drilling Costs, Regulations Likely to Rise](#)

The Macondo oil spill in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico has set the stage for dramatic changes to the deepwater exploration industry, with future costs of drilling and operating in the Gulf expected to rise considerably, according to a white paper released by New York-based Grant Thornton LLP.

While certain cost increases can be attributed to natural market forces, such as insurance and capital providers repricing the risk of drilling and operating in deepwater, other costs increases will result from significant changes in regulatory policy, which are currently being discussed by Congress, according the study, *The Implications of the Oil*

## Spill on Deepwater Exploration and Production.

The repricing of risk in conjunction with proposed regulatory changes will have drastic long-term implications for exploration and production (E&P) companies.

## [Norway eyes up to \\$16 bln new Sleipner investments](#)

STAVANGER, Norway (Reuters) - Norway said on Friday that oil and gas field developments in the Sleipner area of the North Sea could lead to investments of between 80-100 billion Norwegian crowns (\$12.72-\$15.91 billion).

The Norwegian Petroleum Directorate said the total oil and gas resources under development in the area, which is already a gas hub for Norway, amounted to some 110 million standard cubic metres oil equivalents (692 million barrels).

## [More federal waters in Gulf reopening to fishing](#)

NEW ORLEANS -- The U.S. government is reopening more federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico for commercial and recreational fishing that had been closed because of the massive oil spill.

Jane Lubchenco, head of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, told reporters Friday that the government is reopening 4,281 square miles of federal waters off the coast of western Louisiana.

## [Acrimony Behind the Scenes of Gulf Oil Spill](#)

HOUSTON — Richard Lynch was walking down the hall in BP's crisis command center in early May when some engineers rushed up, bearing bad news.

"We've lost the cofferdam," they said.

## [West Coast Gasoline Drops as Refiner Demand Ebbs, Supply Gain](#)

Spot gasoline on the West Coast weakened as demand from California refiners with units undergoing repairs ebbed and inventories along the West Coast climbed for a third week.

Supplies of motor fuel in the region climbed 2.5 percent to 29.5 million barrels in the week ended Aug. 20, the Energy Department said in a report yesterday. That's the highest level since the end of May and 11 percent higher than a year earlier.

“There’s no refiner support, the buying seems to have dried up,” said Mark Mahoney, a broker at Energy Brokers Inc. in Seal Beach, California. “There’s no shortage of supply.”

### [Brazil Delays Decision on Price Petrobras Will Pay for 5 Billion Barrels](#)

Brazil delayed a final decision on the price that state-controlled Petroleo Brasileiro SA will need to pay for 5 billion barrels of oil reserves while the country analyzes more information, Cabinet Chief Erenice Guerra said.

Talks may extend into September, Guerra told reporters today in Brasilia. On Aug. 17 Energy Minister Marcio Zimmermann said negotiations between the government and Petrobras on the price for the reserves would be completed by about Aug. 24.

### [ME gas oil prices decline on cancelled Pakistan cargoes](#)

KHOBAR, SAUDI ARABIA — Gas oil prices in the Middle East region have dropped, weighed down by cancelled cargoes from Pakistan due the country’s devastating floods, traders said.

### [Worrying numbers for Mr Chávez](#)

According to the Economist Intelligence Unit, “even with the rise in oil prices, there is considerable doubt about Venezuela’s oil production and oil export figures – which account for 95% of foreign-exchange earnings and more than half of government revenue. Independent estimates suggest that Venezuela’s output and export volumes have been falling and that official data for the sector may be inflated.”

### [Factbox: Lack of progress on reforms holds Mexico back](#)

Mexico, which nationalized its oil industry in 1938 and created state oil monopoly Pemex, is a top supplier of crude to the United States. But years of underinvestment have left it unable to counter the fall in crude output since 2004.

Pemex thinks there are massive oilfields in the deep waters of the Gulf of Mexico, but it lacks the technology to quickly produce there. Mexico's Constitution bans foreign direct investment in the energy sector, which keeps major oil companies out of crude production in Mexico.

### [Iraq is still many years away from stability, whatever Obama says](#)



The double whammy of Ramadan and August - almost an entire nation fasting in the biting, 50-degree heat of high summer - might be expected to stupefy this entire nation. But on the US east coast the President had no such excuse. Barack Obama staged a less theatrical version of his predecessor's "Mission Accomplished" claim about the war before retreating to Martha's Vineyard for a family holiday.

### [Detroit making big bet on small cars](#)

Can Detroit finally be thinking small is beautiful?

In the decades since the twin oil shocks of the 1970s, Detroit automakers have staged a steady retreat from the passenger car market, seemingly content to focus on the more profitable light truck side of the business while letting their Asian rivals divide and conquer the various sedan and coupe segments.

### [New work centers and HTSP](#)

I argued that to reduce ecological footprint and solve the unemployment crisis, hours of work should be reduced. This shares the available work and reduces pressure on ecosystems. The additional time off work available to households can then be deployed to what visionary philosopher Fritjof Bergmann has called high-tech self-providing. That is, people make and do for themselves in areas such as food, shelter, energy, clothing and small manufactures. The high tech dimension is that the methods of production used require sophisticated knowledges and skills and in many cases, computers and other high-technology machinery. With HTSP, small scale production is high productivity and therefore sensible to undertake in an advanced modern economy.

### [Q and A with author Bill McKibben](#)

Bill McKibben, a Lexington native, environmentalist, and writer, will be returning to Lexington Sunday to speak at Cary Hall. McKibben, the author of several books and a former staff writer at the New Yorker, will be speaking about his new book, "Eaarth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet," in which he argues that humans have created a new, practically unrecognizable planet.

### [Good Intentions, Bad Policy](#)

Perhaps the single most important policy-related insight in economics is that changes in policies lead to behavioral responses. More generous unemployment insurance leads to longer spells of unemployment; implicit government guarantees of financial institutions lead to too much risk-taking. Well-designed policies, like a congestion tax or carbon tax, can reduce social problems by getting the right sort of behavioral response; interventions that create an offsetting behavioral response can push the world in the

wrong direction.

That insight is associated, above all, with the great English economist William Stanley Jevons, who started worrying about energy conservation 150 years ago.

### [Peak oil: two words to worry about](#)

As if you don't have enough to worry about, add two more words to your list: peak oil.

Forget climate change -peak oil is the biggest problem on the human horizon according to some. Bullcrap, say others.

The idea is actually hard to explain, which may be why many have never heard of it. But if the peak oil theory is true, it will affect us all drastically, so it's worth a shot:

### [Energy use is way down - but wind surges](#)

NEW YORK (CNNMoney.com) -- Energy use in the United States fell nearly 5% last year, marking the largest annual drop on record, according to an analysis of federal data by the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory.

Total U.S. energy use fell in 2009 to an estimated 94.6 quadrillion British Thermal Units, down from 99.2 quadrillion BTUs in 2008. To put that in perspective, the average room air conditioner uses about 10,000 BTUs.

### [Crude Oil Heads for Third Weekly Decline on Concern Recovery Is Faltering](#)

“Near-term fundamentals in the crude market are far from rosy, having deteriorated lately due to excess supplies and waning demand,” said Andrey Kryuchenkov, an analyst with VTB Capital in London. “Persistently negative macro data is continuing to weigh on prices.”

### [Crude Oil May Rise After Failing to Drop Below Support Level, Survey Shows](#)

Crude oil may rise next week after failing to break through a technical support level, a Bloomberg News survey showed.

Twenty of 49 analysts, or 41 percent, forecast crude oil will increase through Sept. 3. Seventeen respondents, or 35 percent, predicted that futures will be little changed, and 12 projected a decline. Last week, 39 percent of analysts forecast a drop.



## [Frontline Says Tanker Operating Profit Will Drop as Freight Rates Collapse](#)

The forecast stems from “current weakness in the tanker market,” said Frontline, which is led by Norway-born billionaire John Fredriksen. Daily returns from hauling 2 million-barrel cargoes of Middle East crude oil to Asia, the industry’s benchmark route, slid 87 percent since Jan. 19 to \$11,126, according to the Baltic Exchange.

## [Chevron Remains Committed to Deepwater Drilling](#)

I caught up with Chevron’s vice president for global exploration this week to ask him what impact the BP well disaster and the drilling moratorium in the Gulf of Mexico would have on his company’s plans for future deepwater development.

## [Climate Failures May Stoke Record Coal Trading](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Coal trading is poised to rise to an all-time high this year as prices at less than half their 2008 peak stoke demand, defying government efforts to phase out the most-polluting fossil fuel.

The volume of coal derivatives bought and sold around the world may jump as much as 46 percent this year to 2.3 billion metric tons, based on data from exchanges and brokers, according to Guillaume Perret, founder of Perret Associates Ltd. and a former trader at RWE AG, Germany’s second-biggest utility. That would exceed the record 2.2 billion tons traded in 2007.

## [Danielle Becomes Category 4 Hurricane, 2010 Season's Strongest](#)

Both Earl and Danielle are being deflected away from the U.S. by a low-pressure trough along the East Coast, according to Jim Rouiller, senior energy meteorologist at the commercial forecaster Planalytics Inc. That barrier may break down soon and open the way for storms, he said yesterday.

“I’m beginning to feel more and more confident that the Gulf and Florida will become targets for hurricane strikes as we approach and move through the Labor Day weekend,” Rouiller said. “Once this trough is removed, the U.S. seaboard along with the Gulf will be under the gun.”

## [Afghanistan drills oil for first time in north](#)

KABUL (Reuters) – Afghanistan, believed to be sitting on top of billions of dollars worth of minerals and energy sources, has extracted oil for the first time and plans to pump a

modest 800 barrels a day, officials said on Thursday.

### [Bharat Petroleum Says Losing Marginally From Selling Gasoline Below Cost](#)

Bharat Petroleum Corp., India's second-largest state refiner, is losing marginally from selling gasoline below cost and as much as 2 rupees a liter on diesel sales, an official said.

"There is a marginal deficit on petrol and we are free to revise prices whenever we want," Finance Director S.K. Joshi said by telephone from Mumbai today. "We will take a call at an appropriate time."

### [BP's Hayward won't testify next month](#)

WASHINGTON – Outgoing BP CEO Tony Hayward has refused a request by U.S. senators to testify next month about BP's role in the release of the man convicted of bombing Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland.

### [Iraq seven years later: Was the war worth it?](#)

In a USA TODAY Poll, 60% of Americans say "No," when asked "Do you think the situation in Iraq was worth going to war over?" Similar majorities either felt that the war did not make the USA safer from terrorism or made no difference. The same was said of whether the political situation in the Middle East is more stable.

### [Implementation the crux for China energy plans - IEA](#)

BEIJING (Reuters) - A massive \$736 billion energy investment plan could make China the world leader in renewable energy and help meet global CO2 emissions targets, but turning words into action might prove challenging, the chief economist with the International Energy Agency said on Friday.

"It is definitely very good news for China but also, looking at the implications for energy markets and the climate, very good news for the rest of the world," Fatih Birol told Reuters in a telephone interview.

### [China builds base to tap deep-sea energy: state media](#)

BEIJING (AFP) – China will build a multi-million-dollar research base on its east coast as it steps up its efforts to search for energy sources and rare earths on the ocean floor, state media said Friday.

## [China's nuclear power capacity to see 7-fold increase in next 10 years](#)

In order to fulfill the promise made at the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference, the proportion of China's non-fossil energy should reach 15 percent, including 4 to 6 percent of energy provided by nuclear power by 2020, said an official from the Energy Research Institute under the National Development and Reform Commission, according to a report from Shanghai Securities News.

The official said that under an initial estimate, China's scale of nuclear power should reach at least 75 million kilowatts in order to achieve the target by 2020, while currently, China's nuclear power installed capacity is only 9 million kilowatts. Therefore, China expects to increase the installed capacity as high as seven to eight times in the future.

## [No spin: Windmills fail](#)

Is wind power a viable alternative to low-cost fossil fuels? Consider this: relying on windmills to reduce greenhouse gas emissions not only is expensive and ironically harmful to the environment, it won't accomplish its main goal.

## [Yahoo Builds the Nostradamus of Search Engines](#)

Bold predictions are made every day. We'll reduce our carbon emissions by 50% in 20 years, boast business leaders. No, make that 80% in 15 years. We'll cut the deficit in half by 2015, pandering politicians claim. That leaves us with dozens of conflicting estimates and ballpark figures that are soon forgotten. It's hard to hold experts to their predictions, but that could all change soon thanks to an experimental search engine from Yahoo.

Developed by the company's Barcelona research lab, Time Explorer is a search engine for the past, present, and future. Results are displayed on a timeline that stretches years back and forward. Move your mouse over the future part of the timeline, and you get predictions for what was supposed to happen in that year from as much as 20 years ago. For example, the timeline for "North Korea" lets us know that the rogue state should have developed some 200 nuclear warheads-- according to an inaccurate op-ed in the New York Times by Nicholas Kristof in 2004.

## [Seven Out Of Ten Kiwis Want Govt To Prepare For Peak Oil](#)

Research from Colmar Brunton released today (27 August) finds the Government's draft energy strategy does not deliver the action that the majority of New Zealanders want for securing access to affordable alternatives to petrol and diesel in the future, as cheaper, easy-to-reach oil supplies decline around the world and oil prices rise.

The poll, commissioned by WWF, finds the majority of New Zealanders (72%) think the Government should prepare now for future oil price rises by investing in alternative fuels and in public transport. However, the Government's draft energy strategy proposes taking no action to help New Zealanders and instead it proposes to 'wait and see' what happens once petrol and diesel becomes less affordable.

### [TV series donated to library](#)

Janaia Donaldson and Robyn Mallgren of Yuba Gals Independent Media have donated DVDs of 172 "Peak Moment TV Conversations" to the Nevada County Library.

### [A Box of Fresh Air](#)

Climate control is achieved by a geothermal system that relies on the fact that, 200 feet below the surface, the soil stays at 55 degrees; antifreeze pumped through the walls heats or cools the house. There are two photovoltaic arrays (one on the roof, another in the backyard) that produce electricity on sunny days, and a separate system that provides solar hot water.

The house is only the second in Wisconsin to receive a LEED platinum rating. LEED standards sometimes reward large, wasteful houses simply for using green technologies, but here green wasn't an add-on. Mr. Osborne and Ms. Scekcic made sure the house stayed compact — just 1,900 square feet — by restricting themselves to a single-car garage and a single bathroom on the upstairs level, Mr. Johnsen said. "I can't think of the last time we built a house in which the family shared the bathroom," he said.

### [Backyard chickens are fun, and lay the best eggs](#)

When produced in a home environment, eggs offer more to recommend them than the supermarket variety. Not only are they invariably much fresher and their flavor enhanced at least five-fold, they're also superior when you consider environmental sustainability and animal welfare.

Then there's all that entertainment value. If you've never lived near a chicken, what can I say but ... you're missing out. They're that funny. OK, so they're that stupid, too. Lovably so, though, I promise.

### [Kremlin Relents, for Now, to Foes of Highway](#)

MOSCOW — For years, environmentalists have risked arrests and sometimes beatings by the police and masked plainclothes thugs in their efforts to halt the construction of a highway linking Moscow to St. Petersburg that they say would destroy the Khimki

Forest, one of the few remaining in the Moscow region.

Typically in Russia, such efforts lead to little but holding cells or worse for proponents of a cause. But supporters of the Khimki Forest were handed a surprising victory on Thursday when President Dmitri A. Medvedev reacted to the public outcry. He postponed construction of the highway. "Given the number of appeals, I have made a decision," Mr. Medvedev said in a message on his video blog. "I order the government to halt the implementation of the decision to build this highway and conduct further civic and expert discussions."

### [Analysis: Are EU carbon offset limits a boon for brokers?](#)

(Reuters) - New European Union proposals to limit the use of industrial gas carbon offsets in its emissions trading scheme from 2013 could be a boon for reeling carbon brokers as exchanges wait for clarity before they alter their offerings.

### [It's Not Environment vs. Economy: Green Is the Path to Prosperity](#)

The most thorough studies -- such as the well-regarded Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change -- tell us that the cost of ignoring climate change (including the possible devastation to our species) will be far higher than addressing it. Using less energy and material, or switching to electric vehicles and renewable energy, will help everyone from homeowners to businesses save money. As one CEO said to me, "I don't know about climate change, but it seems pretty clear that producing less carbon is better than producing more."

### [A Newspaper Apologizes to United Nations' Climate Chief](#)

Last December, Britain's Sunday Telegraph newspaper published a 2,000-word article accusing Rajendra Pachauri, the chairman of the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, of potential financial conflicts of interest.

On Sunday, The Telegraph made an abrupt about-face, pulling the story from its Web site and apologizing to Dr. Pachauri. The occasion for the retraction was the release of an audit of Dr. Pachauri's finances by the international accounting firm KPMG, which found that he had, in fact, made little income from his outside dealings since 2008.

### [Protection sought for San Bernardino flying squirrel](#)

Environmentalists have petitioned the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to list the San Bernardino flying squirrel, a nocturnal glider native to Southern California mountains, as an endangered species threatened by climate change.

### [Feds seek to toss states' anti-warming lawsuit](#)

WASHINGTON -- To the dismay of environmental groups, the Obama administration has told the U.S. Supreme Court that a global-warming suit by California and seven other states, seeking to require major power companies to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, should be dismissed.

### [NASA/NOAA Study Finds El Ninos Are Growing Stronger](#)

A relatively new type of El Nino, which has its warmest waters in the central-equatorial Pacific Ocean, rather than in the eastern-equatorial Pacific, is becoming more common and progressively stronger, according to a new study by NASA and NOAA. The research may improve our understanding of the relationship between El Ninos and climate change, and has potentially significant implications for long-term weather forecasting.

### [Receding ice could unlock arctic trove](#)

HELSINKI, Finland (UPI) -- Receding arctic ice from global warming may open new avenues for tourism and trade and could reveal vast new natural resource reserves, researchers say.

### [Fighting Against a Global Dust Bowl](#)

The problem has been building for a long time. Wars, oil and gas exploration, agriculture, cattle production, and general development have broken up soil surfaces around the world. Drought, rising temperatures, and a shift in some regions from grasslands to shrublands have accelerated the problem in the past 10 to 15 years. In the United States, the loss of grasslands and other natural shields that hold arid soils in place is particularly pronounced in New Mexico, Arizona, and Nevada, where dust production has increased by orders of magnitude over the past several decades. And dust begets more dust: It reduces the reflectance of the winter snowpack and increases the absorption of sunlight, causing snow to melt sooner. Five times as much dust now falls on the snowpack in the Colorado Rockies as when the area was first heavily settled in the mid-19th century.



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