



Drumbeat: September 27, 2010

Posted by [Gail the Actuary](#) on September 27, 2010 - 9:20am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[Could peak oil save the human species?](#)

Nobody likes to hear a bleak diagnosis. But without a proper diagnosis, if you have a serious illness, your chances of survival become vanishingly small.

Enter Guy McPherson, conservation biologist, climate scientist and blogger, who despite his gloomy outlook about the prospects for industrial civilization--he thinks it could disappear within his lifetime--regards himself as an optimist. Why? Because back in 2002 after he finished editing a book on global climate change, he concluded that "we had set events in motion that would cause our own extinction, probably by 2030."

But, then he discovered the concept of peak oil and realized that "its consequences might bring the industrial economy to an overdue close, just in time." That development would make it possible for humans to persist on the planet for a considerably longer time by saving the life support systems of the Earth essential to both humans and the other species which humans rely on. Peak oil became a cause for optimism rather than pessimism.

ing the next step. I'm not trying to hinder science - I have no objection to tinkerers tinkering away. But instead of devoting our economy to technical research, and to funding it with our government or with our personal dollars, spent on R and D after we buy stuff they've already developed, what if we tried to optimize what we already have?

[Oil dependence and Cuba](#)

Some progressive researchers warn of the possibility of a catastrophe, but it's curious to see how those same people miss the boat when dealing with the issue in Cuba.

Many of them point to this country as an example of what could be done when the crisis hits, since something similar occurred here with the fall of the socialist camp, and we were able to survive to tell our story.

It's true; we had to go back to draft animals, traditional green medicine and urban agriculture; but, as soon as the Venezuelan tankers appeared in the port we returned to being as oil-dependent and oil-centric as any nation on earth.

[Stuart Staniford: International Trade Not Growing this Summer](#)

While there's no sign of the sharp slowdown characteristic of a recession, it does appear in this series, as in oil production, that global economic growth is stalling.

[Wind, Manure and Sun – New Energy Sources for Russia](#)

Gas and oil resources of our country tend to exhaust, and leading experts are discussing future of power engineering at II Forum of Renewable Energy.

Existing gas resources are expected to give three times less gas, than they give today, by 2030. To cover country's demand for gas, engineers need to start exploitation of a large new gas deposit every year, experts say.

A good solution, according to experts, lies in alternative energy sources.

[Solar energy development cancelled](#)

Tessera Solar North America, the developmental unit of Stirling Energy Systems Inc., has ended plans to jointly construct a 250 MW solar power plant with the city of Phoenix, according to an article in the Phoenix Business Journal.

The company was in the planning stages of developing the project, which would have been located at a city-owned landfill, but was unable to find a utility to purchase the power output and had problems with financing as well, the article stated.

[New Energy Technologies aims to turn windows into solar panels](#)

A Maryland-based firm has developed a technology that it says can turn windows into solar panels. New Energy Technologies says that its new SolarWindow product can be directly sprayed on to windows at room temperature to turn them into solar energy generators.

Currently in the prototype stage, it has been demonstrated powering LED lights and the blades of a small model helicopter from the energy generated, say executives.

The product adheres to glass while keeping it transparent, according to the company, which says that it can generate electrical current and voltage from artificial light in addition to sunlight. This makes it suitable for generating electricity from the fluorescent lights found in offices, New Energy Technologies said in a statement.

[UK: New nuclear plants needed to reach green goals](#)

Britain intends to build a new generation of nuclear power plants to replace its decades-old reactors, partly as a strategy for meeting its goals to reduce carbon emissions, Foreign Minister William Hague said Monday.

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[Venezuela opposition limits Chavez in parliament](#)

Venezuela's opposition won a third of the seats in parliament and claimed a majority of the popular vote in elections on Sunday, a boost to its campaign to beat President Hugo Chavez at the 2012 presidential election.

Although Chavez's Socialist Party will have a majority in the 165-seat National Assembly, it fell short of its goal of winning the two thirds needed to pass major laws and make appointments to the Supreme Court and election authorities without the support of its foes.

[Computer Worm Hits Iran Power Plant](#)

Computer systems at Iran's first nuclear-power plant have been infected with a potent worm capable of taking over their control systems, Iranian officials said, citing the most significant example yet of potential dangers posed by the so-called Stuxnet worm.

The development further fueled suspicions that the worm, which was discovered in July and has disproportionately hit facilities in Iran, was designed to attack Iranian nuclear facilities.

[Oil Trades Near Two-Week High, Equities Counter Supply Concern](#)

Crude oil traded near its highest level in two weeks in New York as advancing equities countered concern that fuel inventories are excessive.

Oil rose to a two-week high near \$77 a barrel as stocks gained after data showed renewed equipment purchases by U.S. factories and businesses. Still, crude inventories in the U.S. remain 13 percent above their five-year average at 358.3 million barrels, according to the Energy Department.

[A Fresh Theory On Blast's Cause](#)

"I'd like to just maintain the possibility that one reason that the cement job may have failed was because of fracking at the time of cementing," said Mark Zoback, a Stanford University geophysicist who serves on the National Academy of Engineering panel investigating the causes of the April 20 disaster.

The remarks, at a meeting convened at the National Academy of Engineering, undercut BP's effort to assign blame for the April 20 Deepwater Horizon explosion to its contractors instead of its own well design.

[Halliburton Defends Its Cement Work, Blaming BP for Gulf Spill](#)

Halliburton Co. defended its cement work on the well that blew out in the Gulf of Mexico, blaming BP Plc's design work for the biggest U.S. oil spill.

Thomas Roth, vice president of cementing for Houston-based Halliburton, disputed BP's contention that his company's cement job let oil and gas flow up to the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig, contributing to the blowout on April 20.

"BP's well design and operational decisions compromised well integrity," Roth said yesterday at a National Academies hearing in Washington investigating the cause of the spill. BP workers ignored "multiple red flags" indicating the well wasn't sealed properly and hydrocarbons could escape, Roth said.

[At BP, a High-Stakes Agenda: Dudley Faces Pressure to Boost Stock and Possibly to Preserve Firm's Independence](#)

"The measure of the challenge facing Dudley is that if in six months there's no change in the share price, BP will be highly vulnerable to an approach by Exxon or [Royal Dutch Shell PLC]," said a London oil and gas banker.

[Chevron: Greenpeace Protesters Still Holding Up UK Drilling](#)

Greenpeace protesters are still holding up Chevron Corp's (CVX) plan to drill a new well in the U.K. North Sea despite a court order that halted a previous protest on Sunday, a company spokesman said Monday.

Greenpeace activists have entered the water ahead of the Stena Carron drillship, forcing it to remain stationary, "for the safety of the protesters," the spokesman said. The drillship was sailing to the West of Shetland area of the North Sea to drill an exploration well on the Lagavulin prospect.

[Saudi Crude Output Falls 11.3% In 2009 Vs '08 -Ctrl Bk](#)

Saudi Arabia's crude production fell 11.3% to 2.9 billion barrels in 2009 from 3.4 billion barrels in the year earlier, while exports fell 14.4% to 2.3 billion barrels, the country's central bank said Sunday. . .

"Domestic consumption of oil and gas is posting continuing growth and at high rates...this requires looking into the reasons behind the increase in oil and gas consumption and working on rationing it," Jasser added.

[Kuwait calls for more compliance among OPEC](#)

OPEC members need to adhere more strictly to existing quotas, Kuwaiti oil minister Sheikh Ahmad al-Abdullah al-Sabah said on Monday, adding he was not worried about softening demand.

"I'm not worried about demand, I'm worried about the quotas," he said.

"OPEC should be more committed to their quotas. There is a bit of slippage here and there."

[Iran Produces Fuel in 5 Petrochemical Plants to Face Sanctions](#)

Iran is producing gasoline in five of its petrochemical plants as part of a plan to halt imports and counter international sanctions, the state-run Mehr news agency reported.

[CNPC: Russia-China Crude Oil Pipeline Officially Operational Nov 1](#)

The first crude oil pipeline between Russia and China will be operational officially on

November 1, Jiang Jiemin, President of China National Petroleum Corp. said Monday.

The 300,000 barrels-a-day capacity pipeline will pump oil from fields in Eastern Siberia to northeastern China's oil production and refining hub at Daqing.

The oil is being supplied under a \$25 billion loan-for-oil agreement struck last year.

[Russian company seeks to buy U.S. uranium mining operations](#)

A Russian company is seeking to buy a controlling interest in one of the largest uranium extraction operations in the United States -- a sale that requires U.S. government review because of possible national security implications.

[Japan Asks China to Pay for Damages](#)

Chinese-Japanese tensions over the arrest of a Chinese trawler captain re-escalated on Monday when Japan said it would ask China to pay for repairs to two coast guard ships damaged by the trawler.

[Iraq Waits for a Government on a Long Vacation](#)

The voters have since watched winter turn to spring, and now summer become fall — and the people they elected still have no leader. They are waiting for their parties to come to an agreement so they can start work. And while the summer months were marked by a surge in violence and by riots over the lack of electricity, drinking water and other basic services, in Baghdad, members of Parliament have lived out a workers' fantasy: a vacation of more than 200 days (and counting), with full pay and benefits, each free to do his heart's desire.

Since the March 7 election, they have met just once, and that was for less than 19 minutes.

[Asia Begins Embracing Solar Power](#)

Cheaper panels, combined with lower interest rates since the financial crisis, have helped put solar energy systems within the financial reach of poorer nations, said Anil Cabraal, an alternative energy expert who, until his retirement from the World Bank in April, got many of the bank's solar projects in Asia and Africa under way over the past decade.

Under the solar initiative it announced this year, the Asian Development Bank hopes to help put in place solar power projects with a total capacity of 3,000 megawatts by 2013.

[Gulf oil spill: Can region keep its seafood on America's dinner tables?](#)

In a normal year, the Gulf supplies the majority of domestic shrimp and oysters to American dinner tables, equaling about 2 percent of the total seafood consumed in the United States. For the Gulf states, \$10.5 billion of gross domestic product is tied to the fishing industry, a number that could be halved this year by the 200-million-gallon oil spill that closed a third of the Gulf's critical fishing grounds.

Now the Gulf fishing business faces a big question: Can it overcome the same kinds of tainted food scandals that have hit the peanut, tomato, spinach, and egg industries in recent years – or will lingering suspicion further hobble the historic, but ailing, fishery?

But unlike other recent tainted-food scandals, the Gulf fishing industry is taking a beating based more on fear than fact, say food-safety experts. No evidence of taint from the spill has yet been found amid more than 2,000 samples taken.

[China, Russia ink statement to deepen strategic partnership of coordination](#)

The deals included a protocol of a memorandum of understanding on cooperation of coal, a strategic cooperation agreement on peaceful utilization of nuclear energy, a letter of intent on investment between the China North Industries Corporation and RUSAL, the world's largest aluminum producer, a contract on technology design for the No. 3 and No. 4 units of the Tianwan Nuclear Power Plant in Lianyungang of east China's Jiangsu Province, an additional agreement on buyer's credit for export between Industrial and Commercial Bank of China and Russia's VTB Bank, as well as several agreements on energy cooperation.

[Russia says ready to meet China entire natural gas demand](#)

Russia is ready to meet China's entire demand for natural gas, which amounts to 90 billion cubic meters/year, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Igor Sechin said Monday.

"Russia is ready to meet China's demand in full," Sechin said in televised comments, adding that "Russia is a natural partner for China."

[SA Near Peak Coal, Scientist Say](#)

A study by geologist Chris Hartnady soon to be published in the SA Journal of Science, estimates that South Africa will reach peak coal production in 2020 when around 285 million tonnes will be produced. Last year 242 million tonnes were produced with over half being used by Eskom and the export market and Sasol sharing the rest.

Eskom has already started complaining of the poor grade of coal it is receiving this year. It is in the middle of arbitration with a supplier over plans to cancel the contract to quality issues. The utility has warned that having to pay higher prices for better quality coal will lead to higher power costs for consumers.

[Shell Invests \\$2 Billion to End Nigerian Gas Flaring After Delay](#)

Royal Dutch Shell Plc and partners are investing \$2 billion in a program to end natural gas flaring in Nigeria, Africa's biggest oil producer, after the projects were delayed because of funding and security problems.

Shell Petroleum Development Co. of Nigeria, or SPDC, has invested more than \$3 billion since 2002 to cut flaring of gas, which is pumped together with oil, said Alice Ajeh, a Nigeria-based spokeswoman at Shell. Flaring decreased 65 percent between 2002 and 2009, partly because of lower production, she said.

[Ocean Power Technologies Completes First-Ever Grid Connection of a Wave Energy Device in the US](#)

Ocean Power Technologies, Inc. ("OPT" or the "Company") announces that it has completed the first-ever grid connection of a wave energy device in the United States at the Marine Corps Base Hawaii ("MCBH"), in conjunction with the US Navy. This connection demonstrates the ability of OPT's PowerBuoy(R) systems to produce utility-grade, renewable energy that can be transmitted to the grid in a manner fully compliant with national and international standards.

The PB40 PowerBuoy is part of OPT's ongoing program with the US Navy to develop and test the Company's PowerBuoy wave energy technology.

[First Independent Study of Oil Spill Confirms Disaster](#)

We wanted to do an independent estimate because people had the sense that the numbers out there were not necessarily accurate," said lead author Timothy Crone, a marine geophysicist at Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory.

Using a new technique to measure the amount of oil that escaped by analysing the footage of it escaping from the pipe, the upper estimates of 56,000 to 68,000 barrels released daily have been confirmed.

[Turkmenistan open natural gas compression station, enabling sharp boost in supplies to China](#)

Turkmenistan opened a natural gas compression station Monday, enabling the energy-

rich Central Asian nation to significantly boost the volume of its deliveries to energy-parched China.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, Turkmen President Gurbanguli Berdymukhamedov said the station would be able to pump up to 60 million cubic meters (2.1 billion cubic feet) of gas daily.

China is set to become the largest buyer of gas from Turkmenistan over the coming years as a pipeline linking the two countries, through Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, reaches full capacity. Deliveries began earlier this year and are expected to hit 40 billion cubic meters in 2015.

[Energy crisis hindering economic development](#)

The city of New York, for instance, with 8 million habitants today uses the same amount of electricity as that of the Sub Saharan Africa which has a population of about 800 million people.

This would mean that electricity consumption per capita in NYC is more than 6000 Kwh per person (exactly 6024) while it is only 63kwh per person in Sub Saharan Africa. This ratio is approaching 1:100.

[Africa's green revolution will founder without extra global funding](#)

A decade ago, the world agreed to halve extreme poverty and hunger by 2015 as part of the UN millennium development goals. World leaders gathered in New York last week to renew their commitments for addressing global hunger, even as this goal is slipping away. In fact, due to the steep rise in food prices from late 2007 to early 2009 and the recent global economic crisis, global hunger has actually increased. Today, one out of every six people on earth is undernourished.

[Lula hails Brazil's oil-fuelled '30-year boom'](#)

The unprecedented Petrobras flotation aims to help bankroll a massive offshore exploration project that may propel Brazil into the premier league of global oil producers. But the offering is also the clearest example of what Brazilians are calling the "new Brazil", a booming, investment-friendly South American nation that they believe is steaming towards a future of prosperity and global clout.

[Council of Europe issues warning on local government cutbacks](#)

“Every local government system in Europe is experiencing some financial downturn,” said a spokesman for the inter-governmental human rights agency.

“The current strain on local government is not a temporary blip.

[Mining by moonlight to save energy](#)

Mining uses much more electricity than most other heavy industries, so it makes sense to move that high energy use to off-peak hours, because that evens out the demand on the grid, making it possible to squeeze more power out of fewer dirty electric plants, and to use more clean energy.

So the Ontario government has just asked the nickel-mining giant XStrada, and the second-largest mining company in the world, Vale; to work nights.



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