



Drumbeat: October 18, 2010

Posted by [Leanan](#) on October 18, 2010 - 8:50am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[\(Bio\)Mass Confusion](#): *High costs and environmental concerns have pushed biomass power to the sidelines in the U.S.*

CARSON CITY, Nev. — With all the plants and trees in the world, biomass energy would appear to have boundless potential.

Yet in the U.S., biomass power—generated mainly by burning wood and other plant debris—has run into roadblocks that have stymied its growth.

Here at the Northern Nevada Correctional Center, officials in 2007 built a \$7.7 million biomass plant to meet all the power needs of the medium-security prison. But last month, two years after the plant opened, prison officials closed it, citing excessive costs.

"This was a project that was well intentioned, but not well implemented," says Jeff Mohlenkamp, deputy director of support services for the Nevada Department of Corrections.

Across the U.S., other biomass projects have met similar fates.

explosion and other spills.

[Scientists lower Gulf of Mexico's health grade](#)

Scientists who study the Gulf of Mexico say its ecological health has declined, though not dramatically, since the BP oil spill. In an informal survey for The Associated Press, 75 scientists offered baseline pre-spill grades on a scale of 0 to 100 in July, with 100 being pristine.

[The mighty American chestnut tree, poised for a comeback](#)

Now that they've got trees with a shot at survival, volunteers have joined federal officials to begin reforestation. They've planted 20,000 to 25,000 chestnuts, and some of the most promising work is being done on land decimated by strip mining that must be restored under federal law.

"Surface mines may make the best springboard for the American chestnut back into the Eastern forest," said Patrick Angel, a senior forester at the Office of Surface Mining who is helping to oversee the effort. "The natural range of the American chestnut and the Appalachian coal fields overlap perfectly."

[The new fear: Electric car 'range anxiety'](#)

(CNN) -- Chase Ballew had miscalculated a little bit. He was bringing home some furniture from Ikea in his electric-powered truck, and there wasn't enough charge to get him all the way to the house.

About a mile from his Portland, Oregon, home he decided to pull into the parking lot of an auto parts store to see if it would let him borrow an outlet. He reasoned that the store would have no problem with him recharging, hoping he'd come back in the future. So he charged for a few minutes, getting enough juice to make it the rest of the way.

[Green Rankings: The Top 10](#)

For NEWSWEEK's 2010 Green Rankings, we worked with three leading environmental-research organizations to analyze the 500 biggest publicly traded companies in the U.S. This allowed us to cut through the green chatter and compare their actual environmental footprints, policies, and reputations. The result: the most comprehensive rankings available on this subject.

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[Crude Oil at a Crossroad of Inventory and Fed's QE2](#)

Crude oil prices had generally correlated with the base metals and equities on U.S. dollar weakness and strong Asian demand. However, due to the abundance of inventory and supply, crude has remained range-bound, despite improved market sentiment, and started to decouple and underperformed other commodities with tighter supply conditions, such as copper, as well as equities.

[Europe Products-Gasoline crack rises as French strike continues](#)

LONDON (Reuters) - European gasoline's crack held just below a six-month high on Monday as strikes in France continued to paralyse oil supplies in the country.

[French strikes force petrol stations to shut](#)

About 1,500 petrol stations in France have run dry or are about to close as fuel supplies are hit by strikes over government pension reforms, officials say.

A blockade of oil refineries is into its seventh day and the body that supplies most supermarkets says one in four petrol stations is affected.

[Airlines told to refuel before flying to France as gas shortage grows](#)

Gas pumps could run dry in France by Wednesday, experts warned on Sunday, as the standoff over pension reforms reached crisis point.

Airlines advised pilots to refuel abroad and UFIP, the country's oil industry association, said that if strikes continued at all 12 of France's refineries, then national shortages would follow.

[Fearing shortages, the French rush to fill up at petrol stations](#)

Fearing a fuel shortage due to ongoing nationwide strikes against pension reform prompted many drivers in France to rush to petrol stations that were still open on Monday, despite a message of reassurance from French Prime Minister Francois Fillon.

[Saudi Arabia warns France of fresh al-Qaeda terror attack](#)

France said the Saudi intelligence agency has warned it of a fresh al-Qaeda attack that is part of a larger plot to target Europe.

[Ukraine to develop oil, gas fields in Venezuela](#)

KIEV, Ukraine—Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich says his country will develop oil and gas fields in energy-rich Venezuela.

[Russia invites BP, Total to offshore oil projects](#)

(Reuters) - Russia's top energy officials met with the chief executives of France's Total and Britain's BP on Monday, to discuss potential cooperation in offshore oil deposit projects usually closed to foreigners.

[Russia to supply Poland with 11 bcm gas/yr from '12](#)

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Gazprom will supply Poland with 11 billion cubic metres of gas a year from 2012 annually until 2022, up from 9.7 bcm in 2010, the Russian energy giant said in a press statement on Monday.

[Morningstar: 2011 Gulf Outlook for the Offshore Drillers](#)

In 2009, we wrote that we thought 2010 would be the year of Brazil, thanks to its huge offshore discoveries and equally large spending plans. In hindsight, we should have focused our gaze a little further north, as the aptly-named Macondo well and Transocean's Deepwater Horizon made the Gulf of Mexico one of the biggest stories of the year. The ongoing impact of the spill has several implications for the sector in 2011. We believe that the short-term outlook for the sector is fairly murky, but the long-term outlook remains bright, as a significant portion of the global oil production being added over the next few years will come from offshore projects. In our view, the production increase should lead to higher rig activity levels and day rates.

[LPG cylinder shortage leads residents to cook with wood and cow-dung](#)

Illegal commercial use of domestic gas cylinders by private hotels, restaurants and dhabas has left residents of Vasai, Nallasopara and Virar with severe shortage of cooking gas, forcing them to use cow-dung and wood instead

[Christophe de Margerie: a man in Total control](#)

Total, the €122bn (£107bn) energy giant, stands alone among the oil majors for a number of reasons, not least being thoroughly French amid the US-UK dominated group of BP, Shell, Exxon, Chevron and ConocoPhillips. Its chief executive also holds a number

of views that few of his peers are willing to admit that they share.

He is a defender of OPEC, the oil cartel whose members include Saudi Arabia and Nigeria, insisting that they "no longer play political games". He speaks out against embargoes on trading with unpopular regimes and believes speculators contribute to high oil prices. And, most controversially, he believes in spreading the word that oil prices are going to sky-rocket.

[Should Big Oil Fund Energy Research at Universities?](#)

Universities need money to perform research, and rich, peak oil-wary petroleum giants need researchers to find alternative sources of energy as well as more efficient ways to drill for oil. It seems like a reasonable match--but are oil company-sponsored research projects unduly influenced by their sponsors?

[Kurt Cobb: Talkin' triage](#)

"Don't waste your breath" needs to become a mantra in the peak oil and sustainability communities. The season for arguing with peak oil and climate change deniers has long since passed. Our time is too precious and the need to act too urgent. The time has come for talkin' triage.

[Monbiot: It goes against our nature; but the left has to start asserting its own values](#)

Progressives, he shows, have been suckers for a myth of human cognition he labels the enlightenment model. This holds that people make rational decisions by assessing facts. All that has to be done to persuade people is to lay out the data: they will then use it to decide which options best support their interests and desires.

A host of psychological experiments demonstrate that it doesn't work like this. Instead of performing a rational cost-benefit analysis, we accept information that confirms our identity and values, and reject information that conflicts with them. We mould our thinking around our social identity, protecting it from serious challenge. Confronting people with inconvenient facts is likely only to harden their resistance to change.

[Dangerous exponentials - a radical take on the future \(report excerpt\)](#)

In this report, the fifth in the Tullett Prebon Strategy Insights series, we set out our core thesis, which is that the global economy is in the grip of a forest of dangerous financial and non-financial exponentials.

As Fig. 1 illustrates, a series of key indicators – including population growth, energy consumption, cumulative inflation and the money supply – all appear to have turned

into exponential 'hockey-stick' curves.

[The 2010 ASPO conference: national security aspects](#)

The Association for the Study of Peak Oil and Gas (ASPO) held its annual conference in Washington on October 7-9, 2010. The theme of this year's conference was "The Future of Oil, Energy and the Economy."

This review summarizes what transpired at the conference with respect to national security concerns, including not only military aspects but related issues such as energy security, financial & economic stability and food security.

[Transportation, Food, and Electricity Systems Not Well Prepared for Peak Oil](#)

Earlier this month, I was able to attend the final day of the Association for the Study of Peak Oil & Gas (ASPO) USA conference, and it reminded me how far behind we are in preparing for a future in which oil is less readily available than it is now.

[2010 Local Future conference features Nicole Foss](#)

The 2010 Local Future conference is finalized; its title is: The 2010 International Conference on the Future: Energy, Economy and Environment.

The dates and venue are set: Friday, Nov. 12 – Sunday, Nov 14, 2010 at the Prince Conference Center at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

[Copper thieves continue to be as bold as brass](#)

MULTI-million-dollar security systems put in place by power companies to stop copper thieves have failed to scare off blackmarket gangs.

Hundreds of thefts from depots and work sites in the past year has doubled replacement and repair costs for some companies and contributed to increases in electricity bills.

[Author describes our 'new planet'](#)

Author and environmentalist Bill McKibben addressed "Moral Life on a Tough New Planet" to more than 300 people gathered Sunday at St. Paul Lutheran Church, 2136 Brady St., Davenport. His presentation, which included photographs from around the world, was part of the St. Paul Lutheran Church Guest Speaker Series.

[China Almost Triples U.S. Low-Carbon Incentives, Study Shows](#)

(Bloomberg) -- China's incentives to encourage low-carbon generation such as solar and wind power are almost triple those in the U.S., according to the Climate Institute.

Measures to spur renewable energy, as well as taxes on dirtier forms of generation such as burning coal placed China above the U.S., Japan, Australia and South Korea in a six-country study and below only the U.K., according to the report, prepared for the Sydney-based institute by London-based analysts at Vivid Economics.

[China Escalates Fight With U.S. on Energy Aid](#)

BEIJING — A dispute between China and the United States over Beijing's subsidies to clean energy industries escalated on Sunday when a senior Chinese economic official warned that Washington "cannot win this trade fight."

[Skill Shortage Clouds Prospects for British Energy Industry](#)

GLASGOW, SCOTLAND — A lack of engineering and technical skills in Britain poses a serious threat to the country's ability to expand its renewable-energy industry, according to those who work in the field, a problem that analysts say is rooted in a lack of emphasis on science education in British schools and universities.

A report this year by RenewableUK, an umbrella organization for the British wind and marine energy industry, has warned that there are not enough trained and experienced workers in the industry to install, run or maintain the technology that it will require to achieve its full potential.

[RWE Says Nabucco Pipeline Can Avoid Turkmen Gas on Azeri, Iraqi Supplies](#)

RWE AG, the German utility planning the Nabucco natural-gas pipeline to Europe to help cut reliance on Russia, said the venture may not need fuel from Turkmenistan.

Nabucco is in negotiations to source gas from northern Iraq and Azerbaijan, and "if those materialize there will be no room for Turkmen gas anymore in Nabucco phase 1, the 31 billion cubic meter capacity pipeline," Stefan Judisch, head of RWE's supply and trading unit, said in a phone interview today. "The supply picture becomes slowly but surely clearer."

[Novatek to start Arctic LNG construction in 2012](#)

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russia's largest independent gas producer, Novatek, will start building its liquefied natural gas (LNG) plant on the Yamal peninsula in 2012, a document on the Russian government website said Monday.

According to the document, which outlines Novatek's Yamal LNG development plan, construction of the first LNG production line, or train, will start in 2012 and is expected to be completed in 2016.

[U.N. environment chief: 'We are destroying life on Earth'](#)

NAGOYA, Japan — The world cannot afford to allow nature's riches to disappear, the United Nations said Monday at the start of a major meeting to combat losses in animal and plant species that underpin livelihoods and economies.

The United Nations says the world is facing the worst extinction rate since the dinosaurs vanished 65 million years ago, a crisis that needs to be addressed by governments, businesses and communities.

[The Revolution Has Begun - "The Shift Hits the Fan"](#)

In the words of filmmaker Tom Shadyac, "The shift is hitting the fan." We're experiencing the dawn of a revolutionary transformation. This awkward 'tween state marks the end of pre-history - the sunset of an ecologically illiterate civilization. Like a baby being born, a new world is crowning.

The revolution has begun. But in fits and starts. The challenge is it's one minute to midnight - too late to avoid large-scale destruction. We have to fan the shift to ecoliterate societies at sufficient scale and speed to dodge irretrievable cataclysm.

[Peak Oil Talk tonight in *Second Life*](#)

Monday Oct 18th is the third in our series of presentations on the future of energy. Dr Steven Sorrell will be presenting a talk on "Peak Oil: a Look at the Evidence" at 17:15 UK time. In his talk, Dr Sorrell will examine the available data on oil production and discuss the likelihood of a peak in oil supplies in the next 10, 20 or 50 years. The talk is open to the public and will be accessible to anyone interested, not just scientists.

Steven's talk will be broadcast in the virtual world "Second Life", so that it is freely accessible to anyone, anywhere in the world with an internet connection. Second Life is free to download and easy to use. To download the software, go to www.secondlife.com/Second+Life to set up an account. Once you have an avatar, you will need to get to the site of our conference, which is called the Elucian Islands. You can teleport directly to the conference venue by pasting the url

<http://slurl.com/secondlife/Elucian%20Islands/214/42/58> into a web browser or the command bar at the top of the Second Life game screen.

[King's Battle With Clerics Dictates Fate of Saudi's Oil Economy](#)

When Saudi King Abdullah appeared in a newspaper photo with 40 veiled women in April, he broke a taboo by mixing with the opposite sex in public.

Since then, the 86-year-old monarch has crimped the power of conservative Muslim clerics more than any of his five predecessors since the foundation of the kingdom in 1932. He prohibited unauthorized religious edicts, or fatwas, and shut some of the websites where they're issued. In the past month, he backed supermarkets employing females for the first time.

...The friction between king and clerics underscores a shift in Saudi society away from the dominance of strict Islamic law. The king is spearheading the move by forging a Saudi national identity and bringing women into the workforce as part of an attempt to make the economy less dependent on oil.

[Crude Trades Near One-Week Low Because of Outlook for Weaker Fuel Demand](#)

Oil traded near its lowest level in more than a week in New York on a stronger dollar and concern that U.S. fuel consumption is rebounding too slowly.

Crude fell as the Dollar Index climbed for a second day, damping the appeal of commodities as an alternative investment. Work began on 3 percent fewer houses in September in the U.S., the world's largest oil user, than a month earlier, economists estimated before a Commerce Department report tomorrow.

[Hedge Funds Cut Bullish Bets on Natural Gas to 2010 Low](#)

Hedge funds cut their bullish bets on natural gas to the lowest level this year as expanding stockpiles drove prices to a 13-month low.

The funds and other large speculators cut wagers on rising prices by 36 percent in the seven days ended Oct. 12, according to the Commodity Futures Trading Commission's weekly Commitments of Traders report. It was the third week of declines, bringing the reduction since Sept. 21 to 71 percent.

[OPEC: A lifeboat in a turbulent sea](#)

So why [is OPEC] a lifeboat? Through its policy on oil production, the organization has succeeded in maintaining oil prices at a reasonable level. It has also succeeded, through production cuts, in credibly and sincerely defending prices, in the wake of their collapse at the start of the global financial crisis (falling to nearly 30 dollars per barrel), all without dealing any blows to the global economy. In addition, the majority of OPEC's member states have since injected the necessary funds for investments and new projects, particularly in the petroleum sector, in contrast to the deflationary policies of the industrialized nations which, first and foremost, attempted to rescue their crumbling financial institutions, while approving spending cuts in their budgets.

[OPEC seems keen to draw Viennese blinds](#)

OPEC appeared uncomfortable in the spotlight of the global media last week in Vienna.

Perhaps members were a little embarrassed that oil revenue this year is on target to be the second highest in the history of the 50-year-old organisation as the world faces the prospect of a double-dip recession.

[France seeks to calm fuel fears as strike momentum builds](#)

PARIS (AFP) – France sought Sunday to calm fears of petrol shortages, with the oil industry admitting it cannot hold on forever as strikes against pension reform intensified ahead of another wave of mass protests.

[French Truckers Block Roads as State Pledges Fuel Supplies](#)

French truckers blocked highways and officials said they'd use police to prevent strikers from cutting fuel supplies as the standoff hardened over President Nicolas Sarkozy's plans to raise the retirement age to 62.

The government said it won't give in to demands that it suspend parliamentary debate on the change and keep the minimum retirement age at 60. Sarkozy's ministers sought to guarantee fuel, saying police would be deployed to ensure access to storage sites as refinery strikes entered a second week.

[Oil workers defy French demand to open depots](#)

French oil workers on Monday defied the government's demand to get back to work and end scattered fuel shortages, stepping up their fight against President Nicolas Sarkozy's plan to raise the retirement age to 62.

Striking workers piled up tires and set them ablaze in front of a refinery at Grandpuits, east of Paris, after authorities issued a legal order insisting that some strikers reopen

the facility. Workers said Monday they would refuse, as curls of heavy black smoke wafted into the air.

[Dh5bn power station for Abu Dhabi by 2014](#)

The next major power station for Abu Dhabi will cost Dh5 billion and over time generate the cheapest electricity the emirate's utility has secured since 1998, according to an official statement today.

[Cnooc's Overseas Acquisitions May Increase Its Credit Risk, Moody's Says](#)

Cnooc Ltd.'s debt may rise if China's biggest offshore oil explorer increases overseas acquisitions following its stake purchase in Chesapeake Energy Corp.'s Eagle Ford project, Moody's Investors Service said.

[TNK-BP to acquire BP's Vietnam, Venezuela assets](#)

MOSCOW (AFP) – Russian oil company TNK-BP said on Monday it had agreed a deal with its part-owner BP to acquire the troubled British oil giant's assets in Vietnam and Venezuela for 1.8 billion dollars.

TNK-BP, Russia's third-biggest oil company, is owned 50 percent by BP and 50 percent by a group of Russian billionaires including banking magnate Mikhail Fridman known collectively as Alfa Access-Renova (AAR).

[Halliburton Net Income Increases as Work Shifts to Onshore](#)

Halliburton Co., the world's second- largest oilfield-services provider, said profit rose as onshore work in North America more than made up for a slowdown in the Gulf of Mexico following an April oil spill.

[In Collins, effects of gas drilling are debated](#)

Since July, Natalie Brant has complained to anyone who will listen that U.S. Energy isn't living up to its promises and isn't drilling safely.

But state environmental regulators say methane gas is found naturally in well water in this part of the area, and there's no proof the drilling is causing the family's health problems.

And U.S. Energy officials said they have tried to help the Brants and their neighbors, but

the gas in their water is coming from a nearby septic system.

[Analysis: Uncertain Energy Policy Among Key Risk to Upstream O&G](#)

Uncertain energy policy poses a key risk to upstream oil and gas companies worldwide, according to the Ernst & Young Business Risk Report 2010.

Uncertainty, which was ranked second in Ernst & Young's previous report in 2009, has grown as a risk as direction of energy policy have been prolonged, partly by the vague outcome of the Copenhagen climate conference in December 2009 and partly by the inability of the U.S. to adopt a clear energy policy. Policy decisions worldwide have further been complicated by the Gulf of Mexico oil spill.

[India to launch shale gas auction before end-2011](#)

MUMBAI (Reuters) - India will launch bidding for the exploration of shale gas before the end of 2011, Petroleum Secretary S. Sundareshan said on Monday at the opening of a new bidding round for conventional oil and gas blocks. Although India's estimated shale gas reserves are not known, the government is assessing the potential for the energy source and is seeking data and technology from the United States, petroleum ministry officials said.

[Iraqi province pushes for more say](#)

Iraq's western Anbar province is demanding more control over its potentially huge energy reserves ahead of this week's auction of gas fields, including the vast desert province's Akkas reservoir.

[Blessing or Curse? Exploration of oil discoveries in Afghanistan not without risk](#)

In September 2010 the Afghan government announced the discovery of an oil field containing an estimated 1.8 billion barrels in the northern region between Balkh and Jawzjan provinces. The find was made after a survey conducted by Afghan and international geologists and represents a key opportunity for the country to resume commercially viable industrial activities.

[US says Sudan votes must be held on time](#)

(CNN) -- The United States says that January's planned voting in Sudan on the southern region's independence should proceed as scheduled, despite a snag in talks over the status of a key oil-rich region.

[Angola's oil-fuelled tragedy](#)

Angola, where British oil companies have substantial interests, does not feature on the UK's list of countries whose human rights records are of concern.

[A battle begins](#)

In July, Ukraine's Government announced coal market reorganisation for 2011 – 2014. The plan assumes the liquidation of unprofitable mines, coal trade liberalisation and privatisation.

Three major players will definitely compete in mine privatisation: System Capital Management (SCM), ArcelorMittal and the Russians. China may also enter the game.

[Global Hydro and Nuclear Power in Perspective](#)

The prospects for any future growth from nuclear power are now very dim, at least, if one was hoping to extract a meaningful contribution from that energy source. The reasons are myriad, but, in the developed world because of societal concerns and the pricing of risk it's not even possible for the nuclear industry to function without government support—from financing to insurance. Meanwhile wind power, with its relatively fast construction times and consequent return on investment at moderately attractive levels, is now more competitive by comparison. Yes, wind is a different kind (and different quality) of energy. But we are already witnessing wind power construction globally pulling way, way ahead of the nuclear industry.

Unfortunately, the entire discussion of Wind, Solar, and Nuclear power is marginal when considering how the world powers itself, in the main. The title of my ASPO conference talk, *Return to Coal*, addressed the coming crossover point when coal once again becomes the primary energy source of the world. When we consider these energy sources, and their actual use in perspective, we can see that the politics of Climate Change legislation for example is actually just a parlour game played in the developed world: and one that offers no practical solutions.

[Severn barrage tidal power plan axed](#)

Chris Huhne, the Secretary of State for Energy, is to give the go-ahead to a string of new nuclear power stations, wind farms and clean coal plants as he sets out how the coalition plans to keep the lights on in the next three decades.

But tomorrow's major statement on energy policy will pull the plug on the vast Severn barrage plan, which it was claimed could generate 5 per cent of Britain's electricity.

Wildlife campaigners are delighted at the news, ending fears of the destruction of unique habitats.

[Government to announce plan for ocean energy](#)

A new blueprint for a billion euro ocean energy industry is being developed by the government, and energy minister Eamon Ryan is expected to make a major announcement over the next few months.

[Financing Dearth Holds Solar Back in U.S.](#)

NEW YORK — The U.S. solar energy industry is having its best year ever, yet financing remains scarce for the billion-dollar projects needed for it to gain ground on global leaders like Germany.

For the U.S. solar sector to move up from rooftop add-on technology to the scale of fossil fuel power plants, the country needs to build large plants covering hundreds of acres. Each can cost as much as \$1 billion, a huge sum for the nascent industry to finance, even with U.S. government incentives.

“Because the debt market is so thin right now, it is very difficult to find lenders who are able to lend long-term,” said Scott Frier, chief operating officer of Abengoa Solar, which has two big U.S. plants under development.

[NASCAR to use ethanol fuel mix](#)

NEW YORK (CNMoney.com) -- NASCAR says that it will use a 15% ethanol blend in its racing fuel, days after the government approved the mix.

[Global Macro Notes: Fed Simply Driving Markets Toward a Brick Wall](#)

And finally, **there is simply a lot of crude oil in the world**. Crude oil inventories just keep hitting record levels. New production keeps coming online in all sorts of places. The peak oil thesis, if not flat-out defeated, seems at least very much on hold from a medium-term supply and demand perspective.

[Apple poised to become largest public company in America](#)

With suggestions that the world is approaching 'peak oil' as supplies begin to dwindle and increasing concern over the role that fossil fuels play in climate change, Exxon looks set to be replaced by perhaps the most potent symbol of the digital age.

[Blowout in the Gulf: The BP Oil Spill Disaster and the Future of Energy in America](#)

In this intelligent and refreshingly readable--if inevitably depressing--expose, Freudenburg and Gramling, professors of environmental studies and sociology respectively, and longtime collaborators and observers of the oil industry, analyze the origins of the Deepwater Horizon explosion and its aftermath, concluding that we may be facing a "technological Peter Principle": we may have elevated "the societal significance of our technology up to, and perhaps beyond, the point where it can actually do what we expect it to do."

[Our Thirst for Oil: A Deeper Dive](#)

This summer's Deepwater Horizon disaster in the Gulf of Mexico called attention to the world's thirst for oil and the hazards of that dependence. It also heightened concerns about the health of the world's oceans. We asked experts in these areas to recommend books that shed light on these topics. Here's what they say about some of their favorites.

[Cable cars: back to the future to help combat peak oil?](#)

A plan to run cable cars along High St could be a "small but significant" start to Dunedin preparing for the effects of peak oil, an Australian transport researcher says.

"Cable cars and trams worked wonderfully 100 years ago when we did not have cheap oil," Associate Prof Philip Laird, of Wollongong University, told the Otago Daily Times last week.

[New Zealand: Pipe upgrade urgency signalled](#)

Dunedin's water pipes must be upgraded before oil shocks intensify and worldwide energy prices surge, a draft paper prepared for the city council suggests.

The paper warns potentially expensive improvements could be much harder to afford in the maelstrom of supply crunches and price spikes as the world grapples with peak oil.

[Funky cob house is first to meet extreme-green standard](#)

On a hilltop in Victoria, British Columbia, Ann and Gord Baird lived in a trailer with his two children for 20 months while they hand-built their dream home -- out of cob.

Their funky, multi-generational home has curved, two-foot thick cob walls -- a mixture of water, clay (the glue), sand and straw (the strength) as well as pumice (for extra

insulation.)

[Fossil fuel future](#)

So there is no denying that cheap fossil fuel has been a boon to humankind, and we are not about to foist guilt feelings on anyone for its use, or even on those who made bundles of money in its extraction and trade. But we now know that like any business, the cost analysis is deficient in one area—the cost on the environment. Carbon emission as a consequence of fossil fuel use is like cigarette smoking to cancer. When we started costing the consequences and saw facts our business bottom lines did not like to see, we went into massive denial. Up to now, there are still people who refuse to see that climate warming is a consequence of the accumulated emissions that retain solar heat in the environment, melting the polar caps and putting additional water into our oceans with consequences on the weather we are now just beginning to suspect are not pleasant.

[Global warming issue spans two ballot items](#)

Fundraising for a ballot initiative to suspend California's global warming law has flagged, but oil companies and other business interests are pouring millions of dollars into a separate ballot measure that could dry up funds to implement the law.

[Global warming will be a problem for youth, NASA climatologist warns](#)

James Hansen, one of the world's leading climate scientists, visited the University Saturday to talk about the scientific impacts of climate change on the Earth's species and the importance of protecting the planet for future generations.

[CG admiral asks for Arctic resources](#)

ABOVE NORTHERN ALASKA — The ice-choked reaches of the northern Arctic Ocean aren't widely perceived as an international shipping route. But global warming is bringing vast change, and Russia, for one, is making an aggressive push to establish top of the world sea lanes.

This year, a Russian ship carrying up to 90,000 metric tons of gas condensate sailed across the Arctic and through the Bering Strait to the Far East. Last year, a Russian ship went the other way, leaving from South Korea with industrial parts. Russia plans up to eight such trips next year, using oil-type tankers with reinforced hulls to break through the ice.

All of which calls for more U.S. Coast Guard facilities and equipment in the far north to secure U.S. claims and prepare for increased human activity, according to Rear Admiral Christopher C. Colvin, who is in charge of all Coast Guard operations in Alaska and surrounding waters.

"We have to have presence up there to protect our claims for the future, sovereignty claims, extended continental shelf claims," Colvin told The Associated Press in a wide-ranging interview conducted aboard a C-130 on a lumbering flight to the Arctic Ocean.



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