



Drumbeat: January 21, 2011

Posted by [Leanan](#) on January 21, 2011 - 10:36am

[John Michael Greer: The onset of catabolic collapse](#)

I've commented more than once in these essays on the gap in perception between history as it appears in textbooks and history as it's lived by people on the spot at the time. That's a gap worth watching, because the foreshortening of history that comes with living in the middle of it quite often gets in the way of figuring out a useful response to a time of crisis – for example, the one we're in right now.

[US natgas rig count gains for first time in 7 weeks](#)

NEW YORK (Reuters) - The U.S. natural gas drilling rig count gained for the first time in seven weeks, according to Baker Hughes data on Friday.

The overall number of rigs drilling for natural gas in the United States rose by four this week to 906, after slipping to an 11-month low of 902 last week. The count is still down nearly 9 percent after hitting 992 in mid-August, its highest since February 2009, when 1,018 rigs were drilling for gas.

[Revolution repeated](#)

First came the revolution in natural gas production - the shift to shale gas which, by bringing huge new stores of natural gas into the market drove prices down and made it necessary to fundamentally restructure Canada's gas-prone petroleum sector. Now comes the revolution in the oilfield. Ironically, the same technologies that made shale gas possible are enabling the industry to begin the restructuring that the shift to shale gas made necessary.

[Eni, Petrochina Extend Footprint in Far East, Africa](#)

Eni has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with CNPC/Petrochina. The Memorandum of Understanding sanctions a broad spectrum of possible business opportunities to the benefit of both parties in China and internationally.

[Miscreants blow up high pressure gas pipeline](#)

Karachi—The outlaws destroyed a high pressure gas pipeline linked with Sui gas field which is second the second incident of blowing out a gas pipe line with in a week's time indicating the nefarious designs to aggravate energy crisis causing serious impact on the economy.

[Why diesel has vanished](#)

The Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (Zimra) last month garnished \$35 million from the National Oil Company of Zimbabwe's (Noczim) bank account, crippling the company's ability to import fuel leading to the current shortages being experienced in the country, it has been learnt.

This, coupled with an export "ban" by South Africa on fuel to Zimbabwe, has exacerbated the situation.

[Population: one planet, too many people? \(report\)](#)

A groundbreaking Population report (Wed 12 January) by the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IMechE) has revealed the world is hurtling towards population overload placing billions at risk of hunger, thirst and slum conditions.

Population: One planet, too many people? is the first report of its kind by the engineering profession. Unless the engineering solutions highlighted in the report are urgently implemented then the projected 2.5 billion more people on earth by the end of this Century (currently there is 6.9 billion) will crush the earth's resources.

[Virtual virtue](#)

McGonigal, 33, is a designer of video games. She argues that the world's most pressing problems, including hunger, poverty, and climate change can be solved by gamers. Yes, the same people who can spend five hours a day staring at screens in basements, twiddling controllers and ignoring their hygiene.

[Richard Heinberg: Limits to debt](#)

For householders facing unaffordable mortgage payments or a punishing level of credit card debt, a jubilee may sound like a capitol idea. But what would that actually mean today, if carried out on a massive scale—when debt has become the very fabric of the economy? Remember: we have created an economic machine that needs debt like a car needs gas.

[All energy could be renewable by 2030](#)

A new study shows that by 2030, we could create 100 percent of our energy around the world from totally renewable and affordable sources. But will we?

[The food bubble](#)Audio

You have seen food prices going up at the local grocery store. That could be just the beginning. According to Lester Brown, a leading expert in both the environment and world agriculture, those bulging supermarket shelves are part of a "food bubble", which could crash.

Lester Brown founded the World Watch Institute, with its annual "State of the World" reports. He's written 50 books, won many honors, is recognized as a thought-leader for our era. Now in his own Earth Policy Institute, Brown's new book is "World on Edge, How to Prevent Environmental and Economic Collapse."

Brown compares our world food situation to the real estate bubble in the United States. We are in a "food bubble" he says.

[Gas prices high - and might get higher](#)

NEW YORK (CNNMoney) -- Strong worldwide oil demand and lack of supply are to blame for steadily rising gasoline prices in the United States, an oil industry group said Friday.

The American Petroleum Institute made no specific price forecast for 2011, but didn't seem to see a drop anytime soon.

"Unless we see increases in supply, it's hard not to see a tighter market," John Felmy, the institute's chief economist, said in a conference call with reporters.

[IEA lauds unconventional gas reserves](#)

PARIS (UPI) -- Supplies of natural gas could last more than 250 years if Asian and European economies follow the U.S. unconventional reserves, the IEA said.

The abundance of shale gas and other forms of so-called unconventional gas discovered in the United States prompted a global rush to explore for the new resource.

[Pickens Says U.S. Spent \\$337 Billion on Oil Imports](#)

T. Boone Pickens, the billionaire energy investor, said the U.S. spent \$337 billion in 2010 on oil imports, a 28 percent gain from the previous year.

The U.S. imported 61 percent of its oil last year, according to the Federal Reserve

Economic Database, Pickens said today in an e-mailed statement. The U.S. is sending approximately \$641,172 per minute to other countries to pay for the oil, Pickens said.

[China Turns Net Diesel Importer on Domestic Shortage](#)

China, the world's biggest energy user, turned a net importer of diesel for the first time since November 2008 after refineries increased overseas purchases to ease a domestic shortage.

[China Seizes Rare Earth Mine Areas](#)

HONG KONG — A Chinese government agency has taken steps to more tightly manage the production and export of rare earth minerals, crucial materials used in a wide range of technologies and products vital to the West.

The agency, the Ministry of Land and Resources, invoked a seldom-used mining law to take direct control of 11 rare earth mining districts in southern China.

The ministry said in a statement, posted on its Web site Wednesday and briefly mentioned Thursday by the state media, that rare earth mining in those districts, all at the southern end of Jiangxi Province, had been placed under its national planning authority.

[Mexican Oil Chief Expects 2011 Production Increase](#)

Suarez says with changes being implemented this quarter, production will not only stabilize, but actually increase in 2011. A Supreme Court decision just last month allows Pemex to pay outside drillers based on how much oil they find and drill for, something previously prohibited under Mexican law.

[Mexico oil thieves get sophisticated amid crackdown](#)

MEXICO CITY (Reuters) - Mexico's crackdown on fuel theft has more than halved the amount of oil being stolen but is leading thieves to switch to more sophisticated and sometimes riskier strategies, government officials say.

[Solar Firms Frustrated by Permits](#)

Ken Button, the president of Verengo Solar Plus, a residential solar panel installer in Orange, Calif., says his company — and his industry — are being strangled by municipal red tape.

Fifteen Verengo employees, Mr. Button said, are dedicated solely to researching and

tailoring permit applications to meet the bureaucratic idiosyncrasies of the dozens of towns in the company's market. And because most jurisdictions require applications to be submitted in person, Verengo employs two "permit runners" whose only job, Mr. Button said, is to "take those permit packs and physically drive them around, stand in line, and pay the fees."

[High gas prices will not lead to a green revolution](#)

First the good news: The cost of oil won't be skyrocketing any time soon. Now the bad news: The price of oil won't be skyrocketing any time soon.

According to Automotive News, despite the recent surge in crude pricing toward the magical US\$100-a-barrel mark that caused consumers such consternation just three short years ago, we are not in for another dramatic spike in oil prices.

Citing all manner of market conditions -- increased refinery capacity, larger reserve inventories and even a number of idle wells among OPEC countries -- oil industry experts seem to agree that, though demand will increase by 1.5 million barrels in 2011 (possibly surpassing 2007's previous peak usage), any rise of pump pricing will be slow and steady.

[Oil prices dipping into consumer wallets](#)

Filling up your car, taking a trip, even buying groceries could get considerably more expensive as oil prices continue its climb toward \$100 US a barrel.

[BRIC Becomes BRICS: Changes on the Geopolitical Chessboard](#)

The rate of petroleum extraction will soon reach the beginning of terminal decline, known as peak oil. This means more than half the world's petroleum reserves will have been depleted, leading inevitably to much higher oil prices and severe shortages. Under prevailing global conditions, this will greatly exacerbate tensions between major oil consuming countries leading to wars for energy resources

One resource war already has taken place -- the Bush Administration's bungled invasion of Iraq, which possesses the world's fourth largest reserves of petroleum and tenth largest of natural gas. Since the U.S. with less than 5% of world population absorbs nearly 30% of the planet's crude oil, who's Washington's next target -- Iran? Behind the U.S.-Israeli smokescreen of alleged Iranian aggression and supposed nefarious nuclear ambitions, reposes the world's third-largest proven oil reserves and second-largest natural gas reserves.

[FACTBOX - Iran's crude oil buyers in Europe, Asia](#)

(Reuters) - Asian and European firms have continued to buy Iranian crude, dodging international sanctions that block transactions with Iranian banks, making oil trade more complex.

On Friday, industry sources said China, the world's largest buyer of Iranian crude oil, has renewed its annual import pacts for 2011, keeping volumes steady at some 460,000 barrels per day (bpd).

[Tea party, environmentalists should join to ditch energy subsidies](#)

If Obama wants to set us on a path to a sustainable-energy future -- and a green one too -- he should propose a very simple solution to the current mess: eliminate all energy subsidies. Yes, all of them -- oil, coal, gas, nuclear, ethanol, and wind and solar. Energy subsidies are the sordid legacy of more than 60 years of politics as usual in Washington. It would be better for national security, the balance of payments, the budget deficit and even the environment if we simply wiped the slate clean and let all energy sources compete for the future.

And with anti-pork tea partyers loose in Washington and deficit-cutting in the air, it's not as politically inconceivable as one might think.

[Fuel-poor households 'should not be forced to use Tradable Energy Quotas'](#)

She noted that one argument for Teqs in fuel-poor households is that they are not profligate with energy and so can trade their unused credits with other people.

However, this is not the case, NEA research has found.

"Many already under-consume to save money where they can, risking their health. Ideally we would like them to be able to consume more, not be anxious or concerned about the extra cost associated with having to buy more credits, or self-disconnecting in order to receive a financial reward," she explained.

[How bad is BP?](#)

Russia is an unsavoury place to do business; that does not make BP's Russian deal wrong.

[Dancing with Mr Putin](#)

The deal clearly makes sense for the Kremlin. Rosneft lacks the skills or capital to manage such a vast project. BP brings both, plus experience of drilling in similar terrain on Alaska's North Slope. But does the deal make sense for BP?

On the face of it, yes. Russia has some of the world's great untapped reserves of hydrocarbons. Granted, the operational risks are not trivial. Although the oil is in shallow waters, the sea ices over for eight or nine months a year. The oil may take longer than expected to flow, and there may be less of it than BP believes. Yet these risks are outweighed by the potential rewards.

[Russia to back TAPI gas pipeline project in Central Asia](#)

Russia will cooperate in a range of energy projects including the construction of the Trans-Afghanistan (TAPI) pipeline, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and his Afghan counterpart Hamid Karzai said in a joint statement on Friday.

The pipeline project participants Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, signed a final agreement in December 2010 to build the TAPI gas pipeline to pump gas to India from Central Asian states.

[Enbridge confirms Chinese investment in pipeline](#)

Shares in Calgary-based Enbridge rose Friday, a day after it disclosed that state-owned Sinopec, China's largest oil refiner, is an investor in its proposed \$5.5-billion Northern Gateway pipeline project.

[Kazakh president hints at backing for plan to cancel elections](#)

The president of Kazakhstan, has hinted at support for a referendum to cancel elections in the oil-rich republic, a scheme which has been criticised by the US, the European Union, and international pro-democracy groups.

[Masdar shortlists Statoil innovation](#)

Masdar is in talks with Statoil about conducting pilot tests in Abu Dhabi on the Norwegian oil company's experimental compact carbon-capture technology.

The so-called 3C technology has been put on Masdar's shortlist of most promising initiatives in the fields of clean energy and emissions reduction to emerge from this week's World Future Energy Summit in Abu Dhabi, said Sam Nader, a senior executive in the Government's flagship alternative-energy company.

[Neighborhood – Grass Roots Economics](#)

As we recover from the Great Recession and begin to factor Peak Oil and Climate Change into our future, Oak Park will be drilling down and reviewing the local and

regional economy and local government's role in facilitating grass roots economics.

In today's increasingly populated, urbanized world, hunting, fishing, and farming just isn't a realistic survival option for most of our citizens. Whether we think about it much or not, we are highly interdependent. People and families must have good jobs and/or support systems to thrive and enjoy their lives. And we must have people in positions and systems that support those courageous souls who put it all on the line to create jobs for themselves and their fellow citizens.

[Need a Ride? There's an App for That](#)

Think of all those empty seats in cars headed to school or work in cities around the world. The idea that filling them is a communal good goes back at least to World War II, when the Office of Price Administration put out a poster proclaiming, "When You Ride ALONE You Ride With Hitler!"

[Electric cars shift from concept to viable alternative](#)

Sometimes, like the song goes, you just can't make it on your own.

And that can't be more true for the future of electric transportation, as was apparent at the World Future Energy Summit this past week. Because, for as much fanfare as electric cars have been getting in the last few years, the biggest hold-up to their widespread use is not so much the cars themselves but a lack of charging infrastructure to support their use. Without a way to conveniently and quickly charge them, EVs will remain a quirky technology that will eventually succumb to society's overriding need for convenience over responsibility.

[Walker kills project to convert power plant to burn biofuels](#)

A plan to spend \$100 million on a boiler that would burn plant-based fuels at UW-Madison's Charter Street power plant was axed Thursday by Department of Administration Secretary Mike Huebsch.

The DOA is overseeing the rebuild of the plant. Work will continue on outfitting the plant with new natural gas boilers. The cost of the project with the biofuel boiler would have been \$250 million — the most expensive building project in the university's history.

[Big Oil's green show in capital](#)

At this year's World Future Energy Summit in Abu Dhabi, several of the world's biggest international oil companies put on a brave green show of solidarity with the global clean-energy movement.

[Oil 'could hit \\$200 a barrel' says investor Jim Rogers](#)

Justin Rowlett: So what about oil? I mean oil prices are pretty high, aren't they? Almost \$100 a barrel. Are they really going to go higher do you think?

Jim Rogers: Well, the surprise is going to be how high the price of oil stays and how high it goes, because Justin we have had no major elephant oil discoveries in over 40 years. The International Energy Agency is going around the world pleading with people to listen. Known reserves of oil are declining. It is not good news. Unless somebody discovers a lot of oil very quickly, prices are going to go much higher over the next decade.

Justin Rowlett: How high do you think the oil price could go then?

Jim Rogers: Justin, the price of oil is going to make new highs. It will go over \$150 a barrel. It will probably go over \$200 a barrel.

Justin Rowlett: Over \$200 a barrel? I mean that's a world record high, isn't it?

Jim Rogers: Of course it is, but Justin, the world is running out of known reserves of oil. Maybe there is a lot of oil in the world, but if there is, we don't know where it is or how to get to it.

[Crude Rebounds From Two-Week Low as Confidence in Economic Recovery Grows](#)

Oil rebounded from its lowest in almost two weeks as growing confidence in the economic recovery made yesterday's price slump appear excessive.

Crude pared its third weekly decline in four as German business confidence unexpectedly rose to a record high in January amid booming exports to Asia. French business confidence jumped to its highest in almost three years. Oil may still fall next week on speculation China, the world's largest energy user, will raise interest rates to combat inflation, according to a Bloomberg News survey.

[OPEC Under Pressure as African, Asian Oil Tops \\$100](#)

OPEC is facing growing calls to boost oil production as crude prices in Asia and Africa surpass \$100 a barrel for the first time in two years.

Nigeria's Bonny Light grade, from which traders gauge the cost of West African oil, rose to \$100.12 a barrel on Jan. 17, passing \$100 for the first time since October 2008, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. Malaysia's Tapis and Indonesia's Minas breached that level a week ago, trading at \$104.36 and \$104.01, respectively this week.

The International Energy Agency, an adviser to consuming nations, said Jan. 18 that "three-digit oil prices risk damaging" the economic recovery, signaling that the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries should raise output. OPEC responded

the same day by saying that global supplies are sufficient to meet demand.

[A Note of Caution for Oil Bulls](#)

For the record, I am, and have been, for quite some time, quite bullish on oil. Despite that, I'm starting to read things that indicate that some of the bloom may come off of the rose, over the intermediate, and longer term. Please note that qualifier; I'm most emphatically NOT suggesting any sort of sharp correction in oil prices is in the offing, barring another global financial meltdown.

[Airlines rise along with oil costs](#)

A flurry of back-to-back fare increases is making it more expensive to fly, as airlines increase ticket prices in response to rising oil costs and an improved economy.

[Schlumberger Profit Rises on Higher North America Demand; Dividend Raised](#)

Schlumberger Ltd., the world's largest oilfield services provider, said fourth-quarter profit rose 31 percent as surging crude prices drove a drilling boom in North America.

[Venezuela hoping for Orinoco boost](#)

Venezuela hopes for extra output of 50,000 barrels per day from new projects in the vast Orinoco extra heavy crude oil belt by the end of the year, Energy Minister Rafael Ramirez said today.

[Belarus oil restart 'soon'](#)

Russian oil supplies to Belarus reportedly may resume next week after being halted on 1 January in a pricing row, Belarussian state-run news agency BelTA reported.

[Petrobras No Match for GE as Record Bond Sale Sparks Slump: Brazil Credit](#)

Petroleo Brasileiro SA's record \$6 billion international debt offering is sparking the biggest slide in the state-run Brazilian oil company's bonds in 10 weeks as it creates a supply glut.

[ONGC Shuts Wells at Biggest India Oil Field After Pipeline Leak off Mumbai](#)

Oil & Natural Gas Corp., India's largest energy-exploration company, closed some wells

at the nation's biggest oil field after a pipeline leakage off the west coast. The shares fell to the lowest in almost eight months.

The spill is estimated to be about one mile (1.6 kilometers) long and the state-run explorer may have lost 25,000 barrels of crude oil, according to an e-mailed statement from the company today. ONGC didn't say what caused the leak in the pipeline, which has a capacity of 212,000 barrels a day.

[ONGC says resumes oil output from Mumbai High](#)

NEW DELHI (Reuters) – State-run Oil and Natural Gas Corp said on Friday that oil production from the Mumbai High field, the country's biggest oil field, has resumed through the ICP-Heera Uran Trunk (HUT) pipeline.

"It has been estimated that oil spill will be dispersed within 48 hours," the company said in a statement.

[Displacing More Oil from Power Generation](#)

Increasing the US contribution of wind and solar power, geothermal energy, and even nuclear power would have virtually no effect on our oil imports or energy security, because we use so little oil for power. However, a pair of articles reminded me that this logic doesn't necessarily apply elsewhere.

[Rep. Markey seeks immediate review of BP-Rosneft](#)

WASHINGTON (Reuters) – Representative Edward Markey on Thursday asked Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner to launch an immediate investigation into a \$16 billion share-swap plan between BP and state-owned Russian oil firm Rosneft.

In a letter to Geithner, Markey, a leading House Democrat on energy and environmental issues, cited "several" national security concerns over the deal.

[New U.S. agencies to split offshore drilling duties](#)

WASHINGTON (Reuters) – Two new government agencies that will be operating by October will divide the responsibilities of leasing America's offshore energy reserves and enforcing safety rules for drilling, U.S. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar said on Wednesday.

[Spill panel co-chair: 'Drill, baby, drill' will drain oil reserves](#)

If the United States embraces a so-called “drill, baby, drill” philosophy, the country’s oil will run out by 2031, the co-chairman of the national oil spill commission said Wednesday.

Former Sen. Bob Graham (D-Fla.) said efforts to curb U.S. dependence on foreign oil by expanding domestic production would quickly deplete state oil reserves.

“If we were to adopt that and if the current estimates of reserves are accurate, we will drain the last drop of oil out of the United States in the year 2031,” Graham said.

[Feds cite broken equipment in deadly W.Va. mine blast](#)

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — A small methane gas fire that wasn't doused because of broken equipment sparked a massive coal dust explosion that killed 29 miners at Massey Energy Co.'s Upper Big Branch mine, the U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration said Wednesday.

[Africa: Dethroning King Coal in 2011 - From West Virginia to Durban](#)

Through activism and legal strategies, US communities and the Sierra Club have prevented construction of 150 proposed coal-fired power plants over the last couple of years, a remarkable accomplishment (only a couple got through their net).

But in South Africa, the fight is just beginning. The national government in Pretoria and municipal officials in seaside Durban will continue invoking several myths in defence of coal, Kusile and the 'COP17', the November 28-December 9 climate summit officially called the 'Conference of the Parties 17' (but which should be renamed the Conference of Polluters). Here are some of the strategies of the South African state and big business meant to blind us:

[Report: Forensic evidence ties 9/11 plotter to Pearl's killing](#)

A 31,000-word inquiry into the killing of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl says U.S. investigators used "vein matching" from an al-Qaeda video to conclude that Pearl was killed by 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed.

It determines that four people convicted in Pakistan of the killings were involved with his 2002 kidnapping, but not his death.

[Tunisians mourn slain protesters, demand freedom](#)

The government has declared three days of national mourning beginning Friday as it struggles to restore calm and reconcile a hopeful but scarred Muslim nation in North Africa. Tunisia is a beach and desert haven for European tourists and U.S. ally in the

fight against terror.

[South Korea kills 8 pirates, rescues hijacked crew](#)

SEOUL (AP) — South Korean special forces stormed a hijacked freighter in the Arabian Sea on Friday, rescuing all 21 crewmembers and killing eight assailants in a rare and bold raid on Somali pirates.

[Pedestrian fatalities rise slightly, reversing trend](#)

The nation saw a slight uptick in pedestrian fatalities in the first half of last year, a puzzling trend for researchers and safety officials because it came as overall traffic deaths were falling.

[Electric Cars Could Be in the Fast Lane for Hawaii](#)

If you haven't noticed, we're in a full-tilt transformation away from conventional cars. Automakers still produce them, and are hurriedly adding on wonderful new efficiencies and technologies to meet the Corporate Average Fuel Economy standards. That's great for the last days of the chapter, but it's too late to save them as the predominant genre. The threat of peak oil prices and the call of the environment have already dulled their luster, and it's time to move on.

The plug-in electric vehicle (EV) won't solve all of our energy or transportation problems, but it's part of a much larger movement toward efficiency and self-sufficiency. Is Hawaii ready to take the plunge to EVs? That's the question.

[Nissan falls months behind in electric Leaf car deliveries](#)

Buyers hoping to lead the electric-car revolution are hitting the slow-charge cycle when it comes to deliveries of their new vehicles.

Nissan says many among the 20,000 who pre-ordered the Leaf all-electric car are going to have to wait months longer than they expected. Those who signed up to buy last summer, expecting delivery of the car this month or next, may have to wait as long as until May or June.

[Electric Trucks Gain Traction With Commercial Delivery Fleets](#)

As auto manufacturers seek to convince car buyers of the virtues of electric vehicles, one key group needs little persuasion: delivery fleet managers.

Commuters may fret about so-called range anxiety -- the fear of not making it to a

charging station before the car's battery needs topping up. Drivers of commercial delivery vehicles tend to follow the same route each day and have a good idea how much power they'll need. Since trucks typically return to a garage every night, there's little worry about finding a charger, Bloomberg BusinessWeek reports in its Jan. 24 issue.

[USDA unveils new green, bio-based product label](#)

Eco-minded shoppers will soon see a new U.S.-approved label on many products, including household cleaners and skin-care items, made with bio-based ingredients.

The new voluntary seal, announced Wednesday and expected this spring, aims to give bio-based products the same boost that the Energy Star program gave energy-efficient appliances. It will be offered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and will look similar to the USDA seal for organic foods.

[DOE backing biofuels project in Louisiana](#)

The U.S. Department of Energy said Thursday that it will back a \$241 million loan guarantee to help build a manufacturing plant for renewable diesel fuel in Louisiana.

[BP: Renewable energy to outpace growth of oil](#)

Given how many variables are involved, predicting the future of energy with accuracy is difficult. But BP's annual Energy Outlook, which came out today, is a closely watched indicator for the state of the energy industry.

The BP Energy Outlook 2030 (click for PDF) forecasts energy sources will diversify more in the future, with a bigger role for renewable, nuclear, and hydropower. Demand will continue to grow around the world, with developing countries consuming a larger share of energy.

[Lack of Transmission Lines Is Restricting Wind Power](#)

Texas is in the midst of a wind-power boom, and at the heart of it lies a conundrum: While plenty of ranchers are eager to host wind turbines, few want the unsightly high-voltage transmission lines needed to carry the power to distant cities running through their property.

The lack of transmission lines — and the relatively low price of natural gas — has thwarted the ambitions of wind-power advocates to expand the use of this alternative energy source in Texas. The oilman T. Boone Pickens, for example, bet heavily on wind a couple of years ago, ordering hundreds of turbines and announcing plans to build the world's largest wind farm in the Panhandle at a cost of up to \$12 billion. He later scaled back, canceling some of the turbine orders, giving up his land lease and saying he was

looking elsewhere to build.

[Indian State to Establish Country's First Tidal Power Plant](#)

India's western state of Gujarat is establishing a power plant that will utilize the flow of ocean tides to generate electricity.

[Toshiba to build 'huge solar plant' in Bulgaria](#)

TOKYO (AFP) – Toshiba and Tokyo Electric Power will team up with the Japanese government to build one of the world's largest solar power stations in Bulgaria, according to a report.

The plant will be built in the eastern city of Yambol by March 2012 at a cost of more than 100 billion yen (\$1.2 billion), Japan's Nikkei daily said.

[An Affordable Way to Buy Fuel-Cell Power](#)

Taking a page from the solar industry, Bloom Energy on Thursday unveiled a service to allow customers to buy the electricity generated by its fuel cells without incurring the capital costs of purchasing the six-figure devices.

[The Love Affair With the Fireplace Cools](#)

“A wood-burning fire in the city is a ridiculous luxury – we would never have put it in ourselves,” said Mr. Arpels, grandson of one of the founders of Van Cleef & Arpels and the former managing partner of Netto Collection, a baby furniture company bought by Maclaren. “In the city, it doesn't make sense to burn fires, because it's inefficient and it's polluting.”

Hard as it may be to believe, the fireplace — long considered a trophy, particularly in a city like New York — is acquiring a social stigma. Among those who aspire to be environmentally responsible, it is joining the ranks of bottled water and big houses.

[What happens when mom unplugs teens for 6 months?](#)

Maushart began The Experiment with a drastic measure: She turned off the electricity completely for a few weeks — candles instead of electric lights, no hot showers, food stored in a cooler of ice. When blackout boot camp ended, Maushart hoped the "electricity is awesome!" reaction would soften the kids' transition to life without Google and cell phones.

[Ways to slash your home energy bill](#)

If you don't cook much, an energy-efficient oven or stove doesn't offer significant savings in energy or money. But even if you're an Iron Chef, cooking has little impact on your energy bill, so it makes sense to hang on to your oven and microwave until they conk out on you — which could take 15 years.

[Sustainable Local Food and Farm Conference: Rooting out the source of our food](#)

Nevada County — known for both environmental consciousness and a strong community identity — is becoming recognized in the foothill region for its innovative ideas and grassroots efforts to form relationships between farmers and those who eat their food.

The first Sustainable Local Food and Farm Conference, being held this weekend in downtown Grass Valley by Nevada County Grown, seems like a natural next step for those in the local food movement — and raises the county's profile regionally.

[Canada: Failing food formula](#)

Social service programs and minimum wage jobs don't pay enough to buy healthy food, say local groups.

And that costs society through chronic disease and poor health.

[Keeping sustainability at the top of the local government agenda](#)

With local government in meltdown mode over the draconian cuts being imposed by the coalition government it's increasingly hard to find councils prepared to take action on sustainability. Everyone defines sustainability differently — I say it's about humankind learning to live with nature rather than in opposition to it — but however you define it, it's clearly more than just the need for carbon reduction. And it doesn't always lend itself to being counted, which is tough in the present climate. Basically if you can't count it or it's not a statutory requirement, then you're in trouble.

[Oil on Our Hands](#)

The simple truth is that we as a nation are addicted to oil. And this addiction is old and deep rooted. It doesn't matter on which side of the political spectrum you are, we are all aware of this. Sonia Hamel, a consultant for the Climate Change Policy and Program says, even though we make up only 5% of the world's population, American's guzzle down 25% of the earth's oil supply, and only 2% of it comes from its own soil.

[The Fourth American Revolution](#)

The subsequent battle between the Haves and Have Nots is likely to flair into protests, riots and increasing violence. There will be no compromises. The 2012 Presidential election could incite reactions on par with the election of Lincoln in 1860. While the country convulsively flails about, foreign adversaries will take advantage of our weakness. Peak oil will throw a further wrench into the downward spiral. Out of this tempest, the country will either turn to a strong leader and more government control or move back toward a smaller Federal government footprint and a return to rule by the people and for the people. The outcome is unknown, but the path is foreseeable. Let's hope that Ben Franklin was right.

[Could Inefficiency Save Us From Peak Oil?](#)

Whether it is activists claiming that a "globalized consumer society without oil is nonsense" or Richard Heinberg arguing that we'd best get used to life without growth when peak oil hits—the idea that the end of cheap oil means a permanent and drastic change to our entire notion of economics keeps cropping up recently. The argument that our economy can't keep functioning without cheap oil because no replacement for cheap oil exists is, on the surface, pretty convincing. But I'm wondering whether our very inefficiencies might prove to be our savior too.

[European Commission Halts Transfers of Carbon Emissions Allowances Until Thefts Are Sorted Out](#)

The European Commission has suspended transfers of carbon dioxide emissions allowances for at least a week while it investigates some computer-aided thievery, including the loss of 475,000 of them from a registry in the Czech Republic.

[New Melt Record for Greenland Ice Sheet](#)

New research shows that 2010 set new records for the melting of the Greenland Ice Sheet, expected to be a major contributor to projected sea level rises in coming decades.

[UN: 2010 tied for warmest year on record](#)

GENEVA – The warmest year on record is a three-way tie: 2010, 2005 and 1998.

So says the U.N. weather agency, providing further evidence Thursday that the planet is slowly but surely heating up.



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