



Drumbeat: August 10, 2011

Posted by [Leanan](#) on August 10, 2011 - 9:55am

[The Peak Oil Crisis: Technology](#)

Let's face it! The whole fossil fuel thing - widespread use of coal, oil, and natural gas could not have happened without technological advances. Without the steam engine, the coal age would have been limited to a handful of people living near surface coal seams and burning coal for heat and cooking, and perhaps a little metal smelting. All the rest of the industrial age - the internal combustion engine and nearly everything else grew out of some technological development coupled and the abundant energy from fossil fuels.

So entranced are we with the constant advances in technology many among us simply can't believe that we will not find a technical fix for depleting reserves of fossil fuels. Some like hydrogen powered cars, others believe that nuclear fusion will soon be viable - there are many possibilities out there. The real question, however, is whether there are developments in the offing that can be brought into general use in time to prevent the obvious catastrophe that will result from the rapidly declining availability of fossil fuels.

[Saudi to supply full Sept crude to Asia](#)

TOKYO (Reuters) - Saudi Aramco, the world's largest oil company, will supply full contractual volumes of crude oil in September to at least two Asian term buyers, steady from August, industry sources familiar with the matter said on Tuesday.

The two buyers did not request additional crude on top of the contracted volumes, and Saudi Aramco refrained from offering them additional oil, they said.

[Mexico oil watchdog rejects part of Chicontepec plan](#)

MEXICO CITY (Reuters) - Mexico's oil regulator on Tuesday rejected the Pemex development plan for fields at the Chicontepec oil project, saying it is not yet ready for production as the state oil monopoly claims.

The recently created National Hydrocarbons Commission, which gives official recommendations to Pemex, said the Agua Fria-Coapechaca field has an unacceptably low outlook for oil recovery and needs more technological development.

[Tanzania govt acts to end fuel crunch](#)

DAR ES SALAAM (Reuters) - Tanzania's energy regulator on Tuesday issued a licence to a state-run oil marketing firm to import and distribute petroleum products for the first time since 2000 after East Africa's second-biggest economy was hit by a fuel shortage.

The Tanzanian government ceased its involvement in oil import and distribution in 2000 after freeing up the economy, but was forced to step in after pumps ran dry.

[Libyan rebels say key oil town within their grasp](#)

(Reuters) - Libya's rebels said on Wednesday they were on the verge of capturing the coastal oil town of Brega, in what could be a decisive step towards unlocking the country's oil wealth and forcing out Muammar Gaddafi.

[Apple Beats Exxon: Less than Meets the Eye](#)

Apple may have passed Exxon as the most valuable *publicly traded* company, but that probably says more about the balance between markets and governments than it does about anything else. Exxon ranks somewhere between tenth and twentieth among oil and gas companies in terms of reserves; the top ten are state owned firms.

[Detroit's Big Three win Energy Department grants](#)

Washington -- The Energy Department said Wednesday it is awarding more than \$175 million over the next five years to 40 projects for advanced technology vehicles.

The projects were selected out of 400 applicants are in 15 states and include about \$40 million for Michigan projects, including awards to Detroit's Big Three automakers.

[Three Views of Urbanism: Alex Steffen, Kaid Benfield and Jim Kunstler](#)

Three important urban theorists are making the rounds this week, with Alex Steffen delivering a TED talk on the Sharable Future of Cities. He starts off with our "clean energy problem"- that we cannot possibly generate enough to replace the fossil fuels we use in our cars.

[Oil demand growth could stall in 2012: IEA](#)

LONDON – Global economic slowdown may stifle oil demand growth next year, the West's energy watchdog said on Wednesday, while warning that tightening supplies could still spur yet more oil price volatility.

The International Energy Agency, adviser to industrialised nations on energy policy, said that although it had not made big changes to its oil demand growth estimates for 2011 or 2012, its predictions were now at the mercy of the global economy's performance in the months to come.

"Recognising emerging economic storm clouds, we also run a lower, 3 percent global GDP growth scenario, which more than halves base case 2012 oil demand growth to only 600,000 barrels per day (bpd)," the agency said in a monthly report.

[Oil Rises From 10-Month Low on Shrinking U.S. Stockpiles, Fed Statement](#)

Oil rebounded from a 10-month low in New York on signs of shrinking U.S. crude inventories and after the Federal Reserve said it may to use a range of methods to bolster the economy.

Futures gained for the first time in three days after the Fed said yesterday it will keep interest rates near zero until mid-2013 and use other tools "as appropriate." Crude supplies fell the most since June, according to the industry-funded American Petroleum Institute. The International Energy Agency said it may need to cut next year's estimate for oil demand.

[Dark clouds force Opec to cut back oil forecast](#)

Opec lowered its forecast for global oil demand, giving ammunition to member countries who have pushed for production drops.

[IEA: Indonesia Oil Output May Decline 6% Next Year To 860,000 B/D](#)

SINGAPORE -(Dow Jones)- Indonesia's crude-oil production will continue on its declining path in the absence of any significant new projects, with output projected to decline another 6% next year to 860,000 barrels a day, the International Energy Agency said Wednesday.

[China's Net Crude-Oil Imports Fall to Nine-Month Low on Plant Maintenance](#)

China's net imports of crude oil in July fell to the lowest in nine months as refinery maintenance reduced demand in the world's biggest energy user.

Net imports declined 1 percent from June to 19.23 million metric tons, or 4.55 million barrels a day, according to Bloomberg calculations based on data released today by the Beijing-based General Administration of Customs. Imports were 19.43 million tons and exports at 200,000 tons, the data show.

[Petrobras refinery in Argentina to close after blast](#)

BUENOS AIRES (Reuters) - Argentine officials ordered Petrobras to close down a small refinery in Argentina after an explosion at the plant killed one person early on Wednesday.

The refinery, located in the southern port city of Bahia Blanca, has a capacity of 31,000 barrels per day. The blast happened in a resting area when workers turned on the lights after finishing their shift.

[U.S. reviews Alaska's oil and gas reserves](#)

JUNEAU, Alaska (UPI) -- The United States must consider a wise approach to tapping into the vast oil and natural gas resources in Alaska, the U.S. interior secretary said.

[Cheap Shale Gas Means Dow Leads Record Expansion in U.S. Chemical Industry](#)

Dow Chemical Co. (DOW) spent a decade moving chemical production to the Middle East and Asia. Now it's leading the biggest expansion ever seen back home in the U.S. as shale gas revives the industry's economics.

[Apple Briefly Passes Exxon Mobil in Market Cap](#)

Signaling either Peak Oil or Peak Apple, Apple earlier today topped Exxon Mobil as the largest US company by market cap.

[Japan Held Nuclear Data, Leaving Evacuees in Peril](#)

FUKUSHIMA, Japan — The day after a giant tsunami set off the continuing disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, thousands of residents at the nearby town of Namie gathered to evacuate.

Given no guidance from Tokyo, town officials led the residents north, believing that winter winds would be blowing south and carrying away any radioactive emissions. For three nights, while hydrogen explosions at four of the reactors spewed radiation into the air, they stayed in a district called Tsushima where the children played outside and some parents used water from a mountain stream to prepare rice.

The winds, in fact, had been blowing directly toward Tsushima — and town officials would learn two months later that a government computer system designed to predict the spread of radioactive releases had been showing just that.

[Japan's Clean Energy Bill May Falter on Lawmaker's Ties to Utilities](#)

Prime Minister Naoto Kan's plan to shift Japan toward renewable energy following the Fukushima nuclear accident faces resistance from politicians compromised by close ties to utility companies, an opposition lawmaker said.

[Tokyo Electric Posts \\$7.4 Billion Loss](#)

TOKYO — The operator of the ravaged Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, Tokyo Electric Power, said Tuesday that it lost 572 billion yen in the latest quarter, largely because of costs related to the cleanup after the nuclear disaster and the compensation of victims.

[EON Cuts 11,000 Workers, Slashes Dividend](#)

EON AG, Germany's largest utility, will eliminate more than 10 percent of its workforce and cut dividend payments after first-half profit plunged because of the government's decision to shut down all reactors by 2022.

[Westinghouse Reactor Takes a Step Forward](#)

The reactor at the leading edge of what has been cast as a "nuclear renaissance" has taken a step forward.

The staff of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission said on Tuesday that it had finished its evaluation of the safety of the proposed Vogtle 3 and 4 reactors, a Southern Company project near Augusta, Ga. The staff has also completed work on Southern's application for a license to build and run the reactors.

[Strapped Americans try to stretch car dollars](#)

McCormick is among a growing number of Americans struggling to keep their cars on the road, as job losses and gas at just under \$4 a gallon take huge bites out of their wallets, a new AAA survey shows.

"Many Americans rely on their cars for their livelihood, and losing access to them could be financially devastating," says Jim Lardear, director of public and government affairs for AAA Mid-Atlantic.

[Heavy Trucks to Be Subject to New Rules for Mileage](#)

WASHINGTON — Big tractor-trailer trucks will have to get 20 percent more miles per gallon by the 2018 model year under the first-ever fuel economy rules for heavy

vehicles, announced Tuesday by President Obama.

[Canada, U.S. announce plans for fuel-efficiency regulations for heavy trucks](#)

The Harper government says it will begin regulation greenhouse gas emissions from heavy trucks starting in the 2014 model year, as Ottawa moves in concert with the United States to address climate change.

The Canadian and U.S. governments both announced on Tuesday their intention to establish fuel-efficiency regulations by next year, that would take effect in 2014.

[India Car Sales Fall for First Time in More Than 2 Years on High Rates](#)

India's car sales fell in July from a year earlier, the first monthly decline since January 2009, after higher interest rates and production changes at Maruti Suzuki India Ltd. (MSIL) damped deliveries.

[Predicting the Electric Vehicle Adoption Curve](#)

As I told the audience in my recent presentation at the Electric Vehicle Summit, I actually see this subject as one of very few bright spots happening in the world today. In particular, it appears that the divorce between Big Auto and Big Oil will be a messy and ugly affair, but one that will, in fact, culminate in the end of the Age of Oil. In this short piece, I'd like to provide my reasoning.

[U.K. Gives Go-Ahead to Biomass Plants to Power 1 Million Homes](#)

The U.K. Department of Energy and Climate Change today approved two biomass power plants that will produce enough electricity to power about 1 million homes.

[S&P U.S. Credit Rating Downgrade: Where to Now?](#)

1. A tripling of the world's population since the end of World War II without the appropriate long term infrastructural planning that should have accompanied this population explosion. In short: The edifice rose ever higher whilst the foundation was allowed to erode. (The population explosion did not only occur in the under-developed countries.)
2. This put pressure on per capita resource availability – in particular land, potable water, food and oil
3. It also led to a deterioration of "Energy Return on Energy Invested" (EROEI) which, in turn, led first to a flattening and, more recently, a reduction of energy output per capita across the planet as Peak Oil came and went.

[Peak oil and public health: Political common ground?](#)

Peak petroleum—the point at which the maximum rate of global oil extraction is reached, after which the rate of production begins to decline—is a hot topic in scientific and energy circles. When will it occur? What will the impact be? While geologists and economists debate the specifics, American University School of Communication professor Matthew Nisbet believes peak petroleum and the associated risks to public health may provide an opportunity to bring conservatives and liberals together in the move toward alternative forms of energy.

"Somewhat surprisingly, conservatives are more likely to associate a major spike in oil prices with a strong threat to public health," said Nisbet—an expert in the field of climate and energy communication. "This could present a gateway to engagement with conservatives on energy policy."

[This election could be our last chance](#)

For a legacy fund to start building the amount of investment revenue to produce lucrative returns, we need to start investing while our natural resource revenue is still flowing and still flowing well. This means not only oil, but mining, hydroelectric: the lot. And given that this is our last election for the next four years – during which time we will reach our peak oil production and peak labour boom – this is our last chance to wrangle a commitment from the future government to create a legacy fund. No matter which parties that future government will be comprised of.

[Food is a fundamental right](#)

Food security involves allowing all people, at all times, to have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs for an active and healthy life. Around the world 852 million people are chronically hungry. Two billion people lack food security intermittently. Six million children die of hunger every year. In the last few years, export restrictions and panic buying; U.S. dollar depreciation; increased farming for use in biofuels; world oil prices at more than \$100 a barrel; global population growth; climate change (with droughts), loss of agricultural land to residential and industrial development and growing consumer demand in China and India have dramatically pushed up the price of grain. It has become more and more difficult to maintain food security in a world beset by a concatenation of 'peak' phenomena: peak oil, peak water, peak fish.

[An Economist for Nature Calculates the Need for More Protection](#)

Gretchen Daily is one of the pioneers in the growing worldwide effort to protect the environment by quantifying the value of "natural capital."

[Off the Grid, Where the Living Is Good](#)

Three weeks ago, my wife and I moved with our three boys, two cats, five bikes and canoe from the New Jersey suburbs to a cabin in the Maine woods. We'll be here for a year, and from time to time I'll be updating you on our experiment in living in tune with our surroundings and off the grid.

We have no hot water, no microwave, no washing machine, no coffee maker and only enough solar electricity to power two laptops and a cellphone. We turn on a small generator every other day to pump lake water into two 55-gallon barrels on our roof that serve our needs. A lot of tasks are harder up here, but we have daily adventures, no commute, views from every window and a chance to cure our suburban kids' nature-deficit disorder.

[Sewage Frequently Fouls Hudson River, Report Says](#)

Despite improvements in water quality since the passage of the Clean Water Act in the 1970s, the group said, 21 percent of its water samples had unacceptable levels of bacteria because of problems like discharges from aging or failing sewage treatment plants, overflows caused by rain and poor maintenance of septic systems.

[Britain 'woefully unprepared' for Arctic warfare](#)

A leaked report drawn up by Ministry of Defence and Foreign Office experts raises concerns as the Arctic ice cap melts the Royal Navy's warships are ill-equipped to deal with a new era of territorial disputes and piracy.

The paper details how the expanding seas will create a "new territorial front" and dramatically reduce shipping times, with Britain potentially drawn into conflicts to assist its allies.

[Canada "too small" to develop Northwest Passage shipping, diplomat says](#)

Canada will lose out to Russia's Arctic shipping routes because it is too small to finance the infrastructure, France's ambassador for the polar regions said Monday.

Melting polar ice will make Canada's Northwest Passage more accessible in the next decades, but Canada does not seem interested in exploiting it for shipping, said Michel Rocard, who recently returned from a tour of the Arctic aboard the Canadian icebreaker Amundsen.

[Lloyd's: Drought Caused Subsidence Costliest Natural Hazard in Parts of Europe](#)

An article on the Lloyd's web site notes that "news reports on climate change have focused on dire predictions of more hurricanes and increasing flooding due to rising sea levels. But subsidence caused by drought, which has already become a major problem across Europe, will also become much worse due to global warming."

The phenomenon is one of the costliest, but as yet still largely unknown, risks to property. "Unlike a roaring storm, the damage wreaked by subsidence takes years rather than hours, but it can be serious," Lloyd's warned.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 United States License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/).