



Drumbeat: October 14, 2011

Posted by [Leanan](#) on October 14, 2011 - 9:05am

[Don't Count Oil Out](#): *Alternative energies won't replace oil, gas, and coal anytime soon*

While lots of idealistic environmentalists and some policymakers argue that we should quit using carbon-based fuels and move to a global economy powered by nothing but renewables, the hard reality is that hydrocarbons are here to stay.

There are three reasons why hydrocarbons will continue to dominate the global energy mix for decades to come: cost, the slow pace of energy transitions, and scale.

[U.N. rights chief urges 'immediate' international steps to protect Syrians](#)

(CNN) -- The top U.N. human rights official deplored the "devastatingly remorseless toll of human lives" in Syria on Friday and exhorted the world community "to take immediate measures" to protect citizens.

[Rebels say Gadhafi loyalists on brink of collapse in Sirte](#)

SIRTE, Libya — Libyan government forces brought more tanks into the city of Sirte on Friday to try to break the last pocket of resistance by loyalists of ousted leader Moammar Gadhafi in his home town.

['The Quest': Daniel Yergin on oil's future](#)

For much of the way, "energy" essentially means oil. Yergin fully expects that oil will continue to be the world's key source of energy for at least the next two decades. From the Central Asian steppes to the plains of Alberta, from the waters of the Gulf of Mexico to, inevitably, the sands of the Middle East, Yergin examines how new oil fields have been discovered and innovative technologies have brought previously inaccessible reserves into production.

[US Issues Oil-Spill Violations to BP, Halliburton, Transocean](#)

U.S. offshore-drilling officials issued their first violations stemming from the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill Wednesday, accusing BP and two of its contractors of

breaking several rules.

The citations were widely expected against BP, the operator of the Deepwater Horizon rig. But the government's decision to pursue contractors Transocean and Halliburton for infractions jolted the contracting industry, which traditionally avoids liability in such accidents.

[Oil Contractors Likely to Strengthen Liability Protection after Citations](#)

The U.S. government broke precedent by issuing oil-spill citations to contractors Halliburton and Transocean in the Deepwater Horizon tragedy, along with rig operator BP.

[US to Allow BP to Bid on New Oil Drilling Leases in Gulf](#)

The U.S. has decided to allow BP to bid on new oil-drilling leases that go up for sale in the Gulf of Mexico later this year, less than two years after BP's Macondo well erupted and caused the worst offshore oil spill in U.S. history.

While testifying at a House hearing Thursday, offshore safety chief Michael Bromwich said his agency "considered and thought about this issue quite a lot," but eventually determined to allow the British oil giant to bid for leases in an upcoming auction known as Lease Sale 218.

[Dangerous allegations in the Gulf of Mexico](#)

A simple swim in the Gulf of Mexico has complicated Steven Aguinaga's life in ways he could have never imagined.

In July 2010, Aguinaga, now 33-years-old, had gone on a vacation with his wife and some friends to Fort Walton Beach, Florida. After he and his close friend Merrick Vallian went swimming in the Gulf, they both became extremely sick from what Aguinaga believes were chemicals in BP's oil and dispersants from the largest marine oil spill in US history that began in April 2010.

[China Begins to Tap Its Shale Gas, Despite Daunting Technological, Environmental Hurdles](#)

CHENGDU, China -- A convoy of white vans barreled down a dusty road three hours south of this provincial capital in late September. Lush valleys were drying out after another long and turbulent rainy season.

[TransCanada's Keystone pipeline shut down - trade](#)

(Reuters) - TransCanada Corp has shut down its Keystone oil pipeline to the U.S. Midwest from Canada due to a lack of light feedstock at the Hardisty, Alberta, storage hub, trade sources said on Friday.

[Crews struggle to drain oil-leaking ship off New Zealand](#)

TAURANGA, New Zealand — The calmest weather in days has given salvage crews hope they will be able on Friday to resume pumping the remaining fuel from a cargo ship stuck on a New Zealand reef.

The ship Rena has already spilled hundreds of tons of oil and crews are in a race against nature to try and remove the remaining fuel before waves break up the vessel, which has begun to crack apart and is leaning on a 22-degree tilt.

[Occupy Atlanta to protest Canadian oil pipeline](#)

ATLANTA—Occupy Atlanta demonstrators are planning to protest a proposed oil pipeline that would carry oil from Canada through Montana, South Dakota and Nebraska.

[Making sense of the protests through a post-growth lens](#)

Frankly, neither side of the debate has a particularly firm handle on the reality of the problem, and hoping that the movement will simply fade away will prove to be wishful thinking. Among all the mass confusion, steady-state theory might help us account for not only the economic problems, but also the ideological divide. Using the Wall Street occupation as our example, let's assess the two sides of the debate and hypothesize how the two groups have come to inhabit such different planets.

[Why not space?](#)

I was completely astonished by the prevalence of the “space” reaction to the inaugural Do the Math post on galactic-scale energy. The post illustrated that continuing growth of our physical scale (energy) is not viable on a number of fronts—not the least of which is that Earth's surface would reach the boiling point of water in a mere 400 years, based purely on thermodynamic arguments, and *independent of which energy technology is employed*. Many comments on the internet chided this view as being hopelessly unrealistic in its willful ignorance of the great space migration to come.

[Ride tirelessly — on a bike with steel wheels!](#)

Twenty-five years after his Well-Tempered Chair, Ron Arad has used a similar process — in which the naturally sprung properties of tempered steel, bolted in tension, gives a natural yield or “softness” — to build a bike with wheels made of sprung steel.

[France launches vast solar panel array](#)

France on Thursday launched its largest-ever solar energy farm, with an array of panels spread over about 200 hectares (500 acres) in the mountainous southern Alpes-de-Haute-Provence region.

With a production capacity of 90 megawatts, the vast photovoltaic park features nearly 113,000 solar panels and was built at a cost of 110 million euros (\$137 million).

[Good Graph Friday: Who's going hungry](#)

At some point last year, about 17 million U.S. households had some difficulty feeding everyone in their family.

That amounts to 14.5 percent of U.S. households, according to a report released last month by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

[Getting to 350 with a \\$2 pocket knife](#)

Conventional methods of reforestation in Africa have often failed. Even community-based projects with individual or community nurseries struggle to keep up the momentum once project funding ends. The obstacles working against reforestation are enormous. But a new method of reforestation called Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) could change this situation. It has already done so in the Republic of Niger, one of the world's poorest nations, where more than 3 million hectares have been re-vegetated using this method. Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration involves selecting and pruning stems regenerating from stumps of previously felled, but still living trees. Sustainability is a key feature of the programme which requires very little investment by either government or NGOs to keep it going. The story in Niger can offer valuable insights and lessons for other nations.

[Revisiting Population Growth: The Impact of Ecological Limits](#)

Demographers are predicting that world population will climb to 10 billion later this century. But with the planet heating up and growing numbers of people putting increasing pressure on water and food supplies and on life-sustaining ecosystems, will this projected population boom turn into a bust?

[John Michael Greer: Pluto's Republic](#)

That's always the problem with utopian schemes; the inhabitants are never allowed to be fully human, though the restrictions are rarely handled with the geometric precision

Plato displayed. When a utopian scheme is put into practice, in turn, what inevitably happens is that whatever dimension of the human is supposedly abolished happens anyway, and defines the fault line along which the scheme breaks down. Marxism is a great example; in theory, people in Marxist societies are motivated solely by noble ideals; in practice, getting people to go through the motions of being motivated solely by noble ideals required an ever-expanding system of apparatchiks, secret police and prison camps, and even that ultimately failed to do the job. One way or another, trying to create heaven on earth reliably yields the opposite; whatever resembles Plato's Republic on paper turns into Pluto's Republic in practice.

[The Peak Oil Crisis: Contagion](#)

With every passing day it is becoming more apparent that the crisis of the depletion of cheap oil has become deeply enmeshed in the European debt crises.

...Our concern here remains how all this will affect oil prices and the availability of oil. Concern over the course of the Greek debt crisis has been roiling the foreign exchange and equity markets of late taking oil prices along for a rather wild ride. Last week we had London oil below \$100 a barrel, but renewed optimism, or as it is now known, "risk appetite," soon sent London oil back up over \$111 where it continues to methodically eat the heart out of the OECD economies. London oil has now been above \$100 a barrel for the last nine months and so far shows no signs of collapsing to the fabled \$60 a barrel level as it did three years ago.

[Crude Oil Heads for Second Weekly Gain Amid U.S., Europe Demand Optimism](#)

Oil rose in New York, heading for a second weekly gain on speculation Europe may contain its debt crisis and that the U.S. economy will recover, bolstering demand for raw materials.

Prices rose as much as 1.9 percent, rallying with equity markets as Group of 20 and International Monetary Fund officials said the fund may increase its lending resources to help stem the European debt crisis. Commerce Department data today may show U.S. retail sales last month climbed at the fastest pace in six months, according to a Bloomberg survey of economists. Technical indicators showed New York crude was oversold.

[Natural gas cost to drop this winter in NY](#)

ALBANY (AP) -- New York regulators say natural gas prices are expected to be 4 to 6 percent lower this winter and utilities have plenty of supply to get through the season.

The Public Service Commission says Thursday its staff assessed the status of companies serving the state's 3.9 million gas heating customers and found they have adequate supply to meet demand during severe winter conditions.

[Tymoshenko's Imprisoning Strengthens Russia Hand in Ukraine](#)

Former Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko's prison sentence may have squashed President Viktor Yanukovich's drive for closer ties with the European Union, putting him at Russia's mercy before gas-price talks.

[Bidders blanch at Iraq's oil terms](#)

Iraq, which is offering up its first undeveloped fields to foreign developers, could lose out on major bidders because of its unusual contract terms.

[PDVSA Said to Require \\$13 Billion for Light-Oil Output Increase](#)

Petroleos de Venezuela SA expects to increase production at existing oil fields by 250,000 barrels a day in its joint ventures through 2015 for a total investment of \$13 billion, a company official said.

[Statoil Targets More North Sea Finds After 'Fantastic' Year](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Statoil ASA is targeting more prospects in the North Sea after the Aldous-Avaldsnes oil find revived interest in the area and strengthened the company's goal of keeping output at current levels until 2020.

[Encana hopes to triple gas liquids output](#)

Natural gas giant Encana Corp. hopes to triple its production of natural gas liquids from processing plants in Alberta as the company and partners boost investments to expand capacity in the industry.

Encana said Friday that it wants to triple output to 30,000 barrels a day from about 10,000 barrels.

[Libya Waha Oil Output May Resume On Dismissal Pledge-Officials](#)

LONDON -(Dow Jones)- Waha Oil Co., Libya's largest operation with foreign partners, may soon resume production after a pledge to dismiss its chairman unlocked a longstanding standoff at the company, oil officials said Friday.

Ending the strike at Waha Oil, whose pre-war production was over 350,000 barrels a day and whose partners are U.S. companies Marathon Oil Corp., ConocoPhillips and Hess Corp., would lift a key hurdle to the ramp up of resuming Libyan oil production.

[Russia's Transneft restarts oil shipments to China](#)

(Reuters) - Russian oil pipeline monopoly Transneft said on Friday it had resumed oil shipments via the ESPO pipeline to China as well as by rail to the Far East after a short suspension due to an earthquake.

"Pipeline shipments and deliveries by rail resumed three minutes ago," Transneft spokesman Igor Dyomin told Reuters.

[Analysis: Last stand for Russia in China gas talks](#)

(Reuters) - Risks are rising that Russia could lose a long-term deal to sell gas worth hundreds of billions of dollars to China as Beijing's pursuit of an expanding range of rival sources of supply strengthens its hand in the long-running talks.

[How Much Oil in Earth?](#)

Hey, Matt: There must be an end to the earth's supply of oil. Has anyone predicted when that will happen? — Just Wondering, via email

By now you must recognize the background music to this week's puzzler. Hear it? The sharp tones of science guys arguing. They do agree that dead dinos and such created our oil reserves hundreds of millions of years ago. It apparently took 10 million years to create that oil. They do agree we're not likely to have another dino invasion; ergo, gas and oil are not renewable. What we got is what we got, and eventually we'll have none. They mostly agree the world uses 84 million gallons of crude oil a day; the U.S. uses 25 percent of that. But that about ends it.

[Is fracking set to transform the oil market?](#)

Hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling revolutionised the natural gas market, unlocking huge quantities of previous unrecoverable reserves trapped in tight rock formations.

The question is whether they are about to do the same for oil -- unlocking billions of barrels of crude trapped in similar rock forms, and thereby upending forecasts about increasing oil scarcity and steeply rising prices.

[Big energy woos the Big Ten](#)

FORTUNE -- As the college football season kicks off, fans at Penn State University and Ohio State may notice the presence of Chesapeake Energy ads. For some, the

scoreboard signage at PSU, a campaign that started last year, will conjure up the brouhaha over the company's gas fracking operations in the nearby Marcellus Shale. "We've turned up our education efforts everywhere so people understand how we do what we do with shale gas," says a Chesapeake spokesman.

[Pennsylvania: Gas Company Sues Over Zoning Rules](#)

The suit, which was filed on Wednesday in Washington County Court, adds to the growing debate over how much municipalities can regulate land use as drilling in the Marcellus Shale ramps up.

[Iran takes one gas field from China to push it on another](#)

Iran has suspended a \$16 billion gas field contract with China in the Gulf to push it to meet its obligations in another nearby field that is already being tapped by Qatar, the Mehr news agency reported Tuesday.

[Some analysts skeptical of alleged Iranian plot](#)

U.S. officials say they are certain the bizarre plot against Ambassador Adel Jubeir was real.

But some analysts say they are not. They find it unlikely that the Iranian government, or legitimate factions within, would be involved in such a tangled plot.

[Obama's Iran Dilemma: How to Respond to a Plot Seemingly Designed to Provoke Escalation?](#)

The fact that President Barack Obama on Thursday found himself insisting that the facts support his Administration's efforts to hold Tehran accountable for a plot to kill the Saudi ambassador to Washington suggests that the world is not yet rushing to fall in line with his call for "the toughest sanctions" on Iran.

[The Next Huge Oil Spike](#)

Four months ago, I warned Fools to carefully watch relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia as both vie for power as the U.S. leaves Iraq. Yesterday, the world learned of a foiled Iranian government plot to kill the Saudi ambassador to the United States. Escalations such as this have me and many fellow Motley Fool writers convinced a portion of your portfolio should be in oil stocks as sky-high oil prices are not as far off as you may think.

[Tiny ND town bans oil workers' 'man camps'](#)

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — Concerned that a Colorado company appeared to be turning an old school building in the tiny town of Almont into dormitory-style housing for oil workers, city officials called a rare special meeting and banned such so-called man camps.

The ordinance passed Monday in Almont — a town of about 100 people 35 miles southwest of Bismarck — illustrates a growing tension in western North Dakota, where temporary housing has risen from the plains to accommodate a massive oil boom. Mountrail and Williams counties also recently put moratoriums on new crew camps.

[Japan's government, people split on nuclear power](#)

As the disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi plant continues to reverberate, two diverging plotlines are developing in Japan: Ordinary citizens are becoming increasingly anxious about nuclear power, even taking to the streets in rare protest. Meanwhile, their government is moving back into its old and comfortable embrace with the nuclear industry.

[IAEA team praises Japan for efforts to reduce radiation exposure around damaged nuke plant](#)

TOKYO — A team of experts from the International Atomic Energy Agency has praised Japan for steps it has taken to reduce radiation exposure for the public, particularly children, near the crippled Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear plant.

[Food prices fuel inflation in China](#)

NEW YORK (CNNMoney) -- Prices in China continued to rise at a steady pace in September, a sign that the world's largest nation still faces significant inflation pressures even amid signs of a slowing global economy.

Overall prices were up 6.1% from a year ago, little improved from the 6.2% rise in August. The reading matched the consensus forecast, according to Jay Bryson, international economist at Wells Fargo Securities.

[China order for US corn signals supply squeeze](#)

BEIJING (AP) — China has made one of its biggest-ever purchases of corn on overseas markets, buying 900,000 metric tons of American corn and showing that growing Chinese demand will play an ever larger role in global grain prices.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture said Thursday that China had made the purchase, which comes despite an expected record grain harvest in China this year.

[Should cheap phosphorus be first on an elemental 'Red List'?](#)

Should the periodic table bear a warning label in the 21st century or be revised with a lesson about elemental supply and demand?

If so, that lesson could start with one element considered a staple of life – but growing endangered, like the Asiatic dhole – phosphorus.

[World demand for metals said a concern](#)

LONDON (UPI) -- An insatiable demand for consumer electronic products could threaten worldwide shortages and bottlenecks of some metals, British scientists warn.

[Economic theory and the Real Great Contraction](#)

The contemporary debate over the future of natural resources features two competing theories of economics.

[Unloved at Any Speed](#)

Instead of conquering India's roads, the much-hyped Tata Nano -- the world's cheapest car -- is struggling to find buyers.

[GM announces Chevy Spark fully electric car](#)

NEW YORK (CNNMoney) -- General Motors, maker of the Chevy Volt plug-in hybrid, will sell a small totally electric car beginning in 2013, the automaker announced Wednesday.

[Go Slow To Go Fast](#)

It's the famous rice-and-funnels effect popularized by former Washington transportation commissioner Doug MacDonald: The slower you pour the rice, the faster it gets through the bottleneck.

[Drive a Car in the City? Time to Embrace Bike Infrastructure](#)

So how to convince well-to-do, aging urbanites who will drive until their car keys are pulled from their infirm hands that it is in their best interest to support the creation of good, safe bicycle infrastructure that allows people ages 8 – 80 to bike confidently and without fear, especially when at times this infrastructure will come at the expense of car

parking or a lane of car travel? Such reallocations of space strike a chill in many a car driver's heart. There will be traffic nightmares! The economy will collapse! If more space is given to bicycles, before you can say "Harvey Milk," crazy liberal cities like San Francisco will outlaw cars altogether.

Or so the protestations go. But the truth is that even car drivers should welcome and support bicycle infrastructure. Here are six reasons why, drawing heavily from the theory of Other People.

[Rick Perry to unveil far-reaching energy plan](#)

Texas Gov. Rick Perry is set to unveil a far-reaching energy plan Friday that would dramatically expand oil and gas exploration — and, he may hope, also reboot his campaign for the Republican presidential nomination.

[Bill would cut heating subsidy while fuel costs soar, Schumer says](#)

ALBANY — Sen. Charles Schumer says the cost of home heating fuel is expected to rise as much as 30 percent this winter.

He also says action in Washington could reduce the heat subsidy that needy New York seniors get.

[Failed energy projects cross U.S. party lines](#)

In April, the company that Hatch touted as on the cutting edge filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection — never coming close to producing the 10 megawatts that were projected at the Hatch Plant.

[What Do You Think Is the Most Important Thing America Can Do to Improve Its Energy Future?](#)

The energy future of America is among the most important topics we face today. New technologies, climate change, and peak oil are affecting the economy and our lives. The shifts are happening—it's just a question of how we will respond. Of course, the question of how America can change its energy future is not a simple one, and the answers here will likely surprise you. It's not just environmentalists calling for increased efficiency and renewable energy. Venture capitalists, students, CEOs, and policy experts are talking about a future that involves a whole lot of sun and wind.

[China Targets GE Wind Turbines With \\$15.5B War Chest](#)

China has taken on General Electric Co. (GE) and Western peers that control the \$70

billion wind-turbine market, striving to repeat its 2010 coup when the Asian nation sold more than half the world's solar panels for the first time.

[Green sidewalk makes electricity -- one footstep at a time](#)

London, England (CNN) -- Paving slabs that convert energy from people's footsteps into electricity are set to help power Europe's largest urban mall, at the 2012 London Olympics site.

The recycled rubber "PaveGen" paving slabs harvest kinetic energy from the impact of people stepping on them and instantly deliver tiny bursts of electricity to nearby appliances. The slabs can also store energy for up to three days in an on-board battery, according to its creator.

[San Francisco Seeks Bird-Safe Buildings](#)

Paradoxically, some of the "greenest" buildings in the country are some of the biggest killers, like the F.B.I.'s Chicago offices, which despite winning a platinum certification under LEED building standards takes out about 10 birds a day during the migration season.

[From Oil and Gas Leases, the Greenest of Schools](#)

Designed by klipp Architects of Denver, the 80,000-square-foot building will use only 30 percent as much energy as the average school in the state. It qualifies for a LEED gold rating, and planners hope to win the top rating, platinum, after it completes the installation of a ground-mounted solar power array later this year.

[Amid weak economy, fewer people are having babies](#)

A new report adds further evidence to the theory that the nation's economic hard times have caused some families to delay having kids.

The U.S. birth rate has fallen sharply since hitting a high in 2007, although researchers have been hesitant to pinpoint the exact reason for the drop.

[Approaching 7 billion people](#)

With the approach of Halloween, we will try to calm our fear of witches, goblins, and zombies. But there is an even larger concern which will occur around the end of October — the world's population will reach 7 billion. Sixty years ago, we were just 3 billion.

[As Thailand Floods Spread, Experts Blame Officials, Not Rains](#)

The main factors, they say, are deforestation, overbuilding in catchment areas, the damming and diversion of natural waterways, urban sprawl, and the filling-in of canals, combined with bad planning. Warnings to the authorities, they say, have been in vain.

“I have tried to inform them many times, but they tell me I am a crazy man,” said Smith Dharmasaroja, former director general of the Thai Meteorological Department, who is famous here for predicting a major tsunami years before the one that devastated coastal towns in 2004.

[The real Greek tragedy may be the climate](#)

The climate always takes a back seat when economies turn sour, but the impact of a euro break-up would be profound. Any country leaving the euro would also breach the treaties of Maastricht, Lisbon and Rome, and therefore be forced to leave the EU. A euro break-up is likely to shatter the EU, and with it the hard won architecture of climate policy.

[Can a carbon price save us from global warming?](#)

Scientists say significant climate change is already locked in and urgent action is needed to limit global temperature rises to 2 - the target set by world leaders at Cancun. This week the federal government's clean energy bills were passed by the House of Representatives, paving the way for a price on carbon of \$23 per tonne from the middle of next year (assuming the legislation is also approved in the Senate). But a carbon price at this level still leaves coal-fired electricity far cheaper than gas, let alone renewable energy. Is it too little, too late? The task of cutting emissions poses a far bigger technical challenge than flying to the moon, so why don't we have programs of Apollo-like proportions to further develop and deploy alternative energy? And why would we rule out an existing technology, like nuclear power?

[Which cities get hit hardest by rising sea levels?](#)

Things don't look good for India. But the United States doesn't get off easy, either. If you look at exposed assets rather than total population, then Miami, New York-Newark, New Orleans and Virginia Beach all climb higher on the list, with \$7 trillion in assets vulnerable to severe coastal flooding by 2070.

[Climate benefits of population curbs merit review-Gerard Wynn](#)

LONDON (Reuters) - Voluntary curbs on population through improved education could ease poverty and environmental pressures including carbon emissions but is ignored politically as the world passes 7 billion people because of long-standing taboos.

Discussion of fertility rates is unpalatable to religious institutions, for example opposed to contraception, and is often viewed as a private matter by conservative governments.

A link between choice of family size and environmental limits, meanwhile, has lost favour since the 1970s after peak oil and food concerns faded.

But as carbon emissions soar it may be time to review a connection with an increasingly urgent climate problem caused by burning fossil fuels and converting forests for food and energy.



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