



## Drumbeat: December 9, 2011

Posted by [Leanan](#) on December 9, 2011 - 9:43am

### [John Michael Greer: What Peak Oil Looks Like](#)

The point that has to be grasped just now, it seems to me, is that *this is what peak oil looks like*. Get past the fantasies of sudden collapse on the one hand, and the fantasies of limitless progress on the other, and what you get is what we're getting—a long ragged slope of rising energy prices, economic contraction, and political failure, punctuated with a crisis here, a local or regional catastrophe there, a war somewhere else—all against a backdrop of disintegrating infrastructure, declining living standards, decreasing access to health care and similar services, and the like, which of course has been happening here in the United States for some years already. A detached observer with an Olympian view of the country would be able to watch things unravel, as such an observer could have done up to now, but none of us have been or will be detached observers; at each point on the downward trajectory, those of us who still have jobs will be struggling to hang onto them, those who have lost their jobs will be struggling to stay fed and clothed and housed, and those crises and catastrophes and wars, not to mention the human cost of the broader background of decline, will throw enough smoke in the air to make a clear view of the situation uncommonly difficult to obtain.

### [Crude Heads for Biggest Weekly Drop Since September as Europe Disappoints](#)

Oil headed for the biggest weekly decline since September as economic rescue measures by European leaders failed to assuage concern that growth is slowing.

### [Economy, gas prices make Americans drive less](#)

Americans have been driving fewer miles every month since March, a decline fueled by factors ranging from the weak economy to high gas prices to aging boomers and teens driving less.

It's the first time the nation has seen six consecutive monthly decreases since October of 2008.

A USA TODAY analysis of data from the Federal Highway Administration shows the miles driven during the year that ended in September were down 1% from a similar measure from February.

## [Gas, Nuclear Demand to Rise as Coal Is Dethroned, Exxon Says](#)

Global natural gas, oil and nuclear consumption will rise 32 percent during the next three decades as population growth drives fuel demand and environmental restrictions reduce coal use for the first time since the 18th century, Exxon (XOM) Mobil Corp. said.

### [Plenty of oil left but cheap oil gone](#)

The world will one day run out of oil, but that is of little concern to delegates at the World Petroleum Congress in Doha, whose eyes are fixed on more crude discoveries and advances to prolong supplies.

'To tell someone that he's going to die is not a prediction, it's a tautology. What he wants to know is when and how,' Nasser al-Jaidah, chief executive of Qatar Petroleum International, said at the Congress.

### [Mexico: Rising Natural Gas Superstate?](#)

"Mexico's [energy] future seems even brighter. According to U.S. Energy Information Administration Executive Director Maria van der Hoeven, Mexico's significant untapped natural gas reserves, if properly developed, could eventually provide Mexico with energy independence. She recently stated, "Mexico is sitting on very large natural gas fields that could allow it to end gas imports and could give it energy independence.

### [Chavez: Venezuela willing to talk with Exxon Mobil](#)

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez says his government would be open to negotiating with Exxon Mobil Corp. in a dispute over the nationalization of an oil project in the country.

Venezuelan officials have previously said Exxon Mobil's compensation demands are excessive. The Irving, Texas-based oil company turned to international arbitration after refusing to accept the terms of the nationalization in 2007.

### [China wants Sudan oil deal by Christmas: special envoy](#)

China wants Sudan and South Sudan to resolve a row over oil transit fees by Christmas in order to avoid any potential disruptions of crude supply from the new nation, the Asian country's special envoy said on Wednesday.

South Sudan seceded from Sudan in July under a 2005 peace deal, taking about three-quarters of the formerly united country's roughly 500,000 barrels per day of oil output.

## [New oil strikes keep oil prices on the defensive](#)

United States Oil is down for the year as new finds ensure continued supply for the near term, but big oil executives are giving widely divergent views of the future of petroleum as well as its current scarcity.

## [Opportunities and Threats In Energy Investments](#)

Oil supply has stalled since 2005, and growth from regions such as Brazil, the U.S. and Canada merely offsets the decline in the North Sea and Mexico. Further, 50% of "proven" oil resources are in the Middle East, and some 20% in Venezuela. Countries like Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Libya have uncertainties in their oil supply. Peak Oil author Matthew Simmons wrote in his book "Twilight in the Desert: The Coming Saudi Oil Shock and the World Economy" that Saudi Arabia is approaching the peak of its production, and that the kingdom has damaged its oil reserves by pumping salt water to gain short-term production increase. The bottom line is that information about energy reserves and production capabilities are not transparent: many countries withhold information about their wells and the condition of their reserves.

## [Gazprom says expects gas output to rise in 2012](#)

(Reuters) - Russian gas export monopoly Gazprom expects to increase gas output to 522-528 billion cubic metres next year from 510 bcm in 2011, a company official said on Friday.

## [Kazakhstan nears \\$1 bln deal to join gas project-sources](#)

(Reuters) - Kazakhstan and the owners of the Karachaganak oil and gas field expect next week to sign a deal to transfer a 10 percent stake in the project to the Central Asian state in return for \$1 billion and the withdrawal of legal claims, two sources close to negotiations told Reuters.

## [Republicans tie Keystone pipe to tax cut bill](#)

(Reuters) - House of Representatives will include approval of a Canada-to-Texas oil pipeline in a payroll tax cut bill, House Speaker John Boehner said on Thursday, raising the political stakes on the issue.

## [Human rights abuses? Blame the parents](#)

Action is needed to stop companies avoiding legal liability for alleged human rights violations by hiding behind subsidiaries.

### [BP's Macondo payout hits \\$2.3bn](#)

BP has said it has now made a total of \$2.3 billion in payments to the Gulf Coast Claims Facility, the organization set up to handle compensation claims related to the Macondo disaster.

### [E.P.A. Links Tainted Water in Wyoming to Hydraulic Fracturing for Natural Gas](#)

DENVER — Chemicals used to hydraulically fracture rocks in drilling for natural gas in a remote valley in central Wyoming are the likely cause of contaminated local water supplies, federal regulators said Thursday.

The draft report, after a three-year study by the Environmental Protection Agency, represents a new scientific and political skirmish line over whether fracking, as it is more commonly known, poses a threat in the dozens of places around the nation where it is now being used to extract previously unreachable energy resources locked within rock.

### [Exxon predicts influx of hybrids on roads](#)

NEW YORK—Exxon Mobil Corp. expects to see more and more hybrids on the world's roads, with gas-sipping models like the Toyota Prius making up half of all vehicles by 2040.

The largest publicly traded oil and gas company Thursday released its annual energy outlook. It says the use of hybrids —vehicles that rely on both gas and electricity for power — and other gains in fuel efficiency will keep energy demand in check in the U. S. and other major industrialized countries for years.

### [Requiem for a Train](#)

High-speed rail is dead in America. Should we mourn it?

### [Solyndra Casts Shadow on Renewable-Energy Grants](#)

The political firestorm that erupted when solar-panel maker Solyndra defaulted on its federal loan is sure to affect clean-energy tax credits that are set to expire at the end of the year, an overwhelming majority of *National Journal's* Energy and Environment Insiders say.

### [A Somber New Year's Eve for Solar?](#)

While renewable energy advocates have long argued that government subsidies for the

sector are dwarfed by those for more traditional energy industries, they have had a more poignant complaint since the onset of the recession: one of the subsidies they do get, an investment tax credit, has been rendered nearly useless by the general business downturn.

### [Historic Pearl Harbor Looks to New Energy Future](#)

A sign on Paquet Hall boasts that it is “the first and still the finest berthing” at Pearl Harbor. The three-story Bachelor Enlisted Quarters, built in a U-shape to enclose a palm-lined courtyard, survived the December 7 surprise attack 70 years ago to become a cherished part of the base’s history. This year, the 1927 building was crowned for a role in the U.S. military’s future, when 1,064 solar photovoltaic modules were installed on its rooftop.

### [U.S. Agency Is Ordered to Change Wind Rules](#)

WASHINGTON — A federal power agency discriminated against wind operators in the Pacific Northwest when it unplugged their generators to cope with a surplus of renewable energy on its transmission system this year, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission ruled on Tuesday. It ordered the agency, the Bonneville Power Administration, to rewrite its rules.

### [New York May Be Safely Evacuated Ahead of Nuclear Event, NRC’s Jaczko Says](#)

The New York City area may be safely evacuated in the event of a Fukushima-like disaster at the Indian Point nuclear plant because a crisis would unfold slowly, the top U.S. nuclear regulator said.

### [Nuclear Generation Capacity Drops in 2011](#)

After reaching an all-time high in 2010, this year the nuclear power capacity—the amount of electricity that all the world’s nuclear power plants can produce—took a dip.

### [The Peak Oil Crisis: \$E=mc^2\$](#)

There have been some interesting developments in the cold fusion, or the now-preferred name Low Energy Nuclear Reactions (LENR), story in the last couple of weeks that are worth noting. For the last 20 years a small band of ill-funded scientists have been laboring away at combining either palladium or nickel with hydrogen in an effort to produce heat. After hundreds of experiments, each varying some parameter or other, a number of scientists say they can produce heat in reproducible experiments. Because of the bad name acquired 20 years ago after many labs were unable to reproduce the effects seen in the Utah “cold fusion” experiments, developments in the field have been slow and gone largely unreported except in highly technical circles.

## [All the World's a Grave](#)

Most of us will spend our tomorrows doing what we did today. If we have a job we'll go to work. Kids will go to school. And stuffed somewhere around all that is shopping, laundry, cooking, and everything else. Yesterday, today, and tomorrow look pretty much the same.

Here's what's going to happen if we all keep putting one foot in front of the other courtesy of Jeremy Leggett, geologist turned environmentalist writing about the near-future in 2006 ...

## [Here's The Only Food Pyramid That Matters In A Peak Oil Future](#)

In a peak oil future, savvy consumers will rely on grain, fruit and vegetables, which have a smaller energy input.

## [The Destruction of Canada's Family Farm](#)

I have read that the type of agricultural production practiced in “developed countries” consumes ten units of non-renewal fossil fuel energy to produce one unit of energy in the form of food. If this ratio is correct, then clearly our type of food production is not sustainable in the long term. There was an international conference a few years ago entitled “What Will We Eat When the Oil Runs Out” that dealt with this issue and the concept of peak oil. Cheap energy is not so cheap anymore and it will very likely become more expensive in the future. We need to be developing food production systems that are far less dependant of fossil fuel and more in tune with nature. We need more farmers and not less. The Harper government is determined to head in the wrong direction.

## [Soul in the Soil](#)

Maybe you can you make your own soup. But can you grow the onions and garlic for its aromatic beginnings? Can you darn a sock or even imagine why you would consider it? There are some around who will tell you, like it or not, to have your hoes and needles at the ready with the coming of peak oil and climate destruction, but the truth is that many Americans have yearned to return to their rural roots almost from the time they left for the city.

So ingrained is the association between back-to-the-landers and sprout-eating hippies of the 1970s that discovering two early, distinct waves of the movement was a surprise to history professor Dona Brown, author of the new book *Back to the Land: The Enduring Dream of Self-Sufficiency in Modern America*. “Like most people I had no idea about it,” she says. “I didn’t know they existed. I fell into documents.”



## [Water Transfer to San Diego Is Upheld](#)

Eight years ago, California's Imperial Valley, a blooming desert that has access to more water than any place in the West, agreed to transfer 10 percent of its bounty to San Diego and Los Angeles and other metropolitan areas of Southern California.

It was and remains the country's largest transfer of water from farmers to cities. This week a state appeals court rejected a request to invalidate it as unconstitutional.

## [Lead From Old U.S. Batteries Sent to Mexico Raises Risks](#)

NAUCALPAN DE JUÁREZ, Mexico — The spent batteries Americans turn in for recycling are increasingly being sent to Mexico, where their lead is often extracted by crude methods that are illegal in the United States, exposing plant workers and local residents to dangerous levels of a toxic metal.

The rising flow of batteries is a result of strict new Environmental Protection Agency standards on lead pollution, which make domestic recycling more difficult and expensive, but do not prohibit companies from exporting the work and the danger to countries where standards are low and enforcement is lax.

## [Time for a Vacation? Climate Change and the Human Clock](#)

In the natural world, scientists have documented a vast range of shifts in biological behavior related to climate change, from birds laying their eggs earlier to bears emerging earlier from hibernation in time for the first blossom of spring.

As it turns out, humans are not excluded from such behavioral changes. Over the last 30 years, a new study has found, peak park attendance has shifted by about four days, probably in response to climate change.

## [Arctic: Colliding Geopolitics and the Arctic](#)

Climate change is prompting a rethink regarding the geopolitical significance of the Arctic. Yet while 'classical' approaches to geopolitics cast the region as the site of a new Great Game, critical geopolitics suggests exercising caution.

## [How can climate change denialism be explained?](#)

As Clive Hamilton has pointed out, there is a certain kind of individual who is offended by the conclusions of the climate scientists. For such people - frequently ageing white males of science, engineering and technology backgrounds - the conclusions of the climate scientists are experienced as a shock, as a challenge, but most deeply of all as an affront to their deepest and most cherished basic faith: the capacity and indeed the right

of "mankind" to subdue the Earth and all its fruits and to establish a "mastery" over nature. I use these words advisedly. The conclusions of the climate scientists suggested a problem with this generally free-thinking, secular, pro-capitalist faith.

The people I have in mind were the kind who had mercilessly mocked the once-fashionable idea that there might ultimately be "limits to growth". They are the kind of people who had vigorously and sometimes successfully disputed claims about the eventual depletion of natural resources or theories like "peak oil". Now they were faced with scientists who had arrived at the conclusion that there was something even more fundamentally amiss in the process of the industrial revolution itself - namely, that the decision to provide the energy for industrialisation by burning fossil fuels was possibly the most consequential, although perfectly innocent, misstep human beings had ever taken. Within the mindset of the engineers and geologists, such a thought is not merely mistaken. It is intolerable and deeply offensive. Those preaching this doctrine have to be resisted and indeed denounced.

### [Biggest Polluters Hold Up Agreement at UN Global Warming Talks](#)

China, the U.S. and India, the three biggest polluters, maintained their resistance to a time line leading to a legally-binding climate treaty, threatening efforts to keep up the fight on global warming this year.

### [Climate caucus winds down without new treaty](#)

Leading scientists warned this week that climate change is accelerating, but this year's U.N. climate negotiations are poised to end without a new binding accord to reduce the world's greenhouse gas emissions.

### [Climate Change's Dead Letters](#)

To fight climate change, local and regional efforts may achieve more than global treaties like the Kyoto Protocol.

### [Butterfly effect flags climate chaos](#)

But from outside the artificial atmospheric bubble of the UN climate talks, this planet continues to issue statements more eloquent, powerful and enduring than any of the human chatter. Its voice can be found in the volumes of scientific journals and expert reports as new pages are added to the evolving 150-year-plus archive of climate knowledge.



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