



Drumbeat: December 23, 2011

Posted by [Leanan](#) on December 23, 2011 - 9:51am

[‘Secret’ Environment Canada study warns of oil sands’ impact on habitat](#)

OTTAWA — Contamination of a major western Canadian river basin from oil sands operations is a “high-profile concern” for downstream communities and wildlife, says a newly-released “secret” presentation prepared last spring by Environment Canada that highlighted numerous warnings about the industry’s growing footprint on land, air, water and the climate.

The warnings from the department contrast with recent claims made by Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Environment Minister Peter Kent that the industry is being unfairly targeted by environmentalists who exaggerate its impacts on nature and people.

[Oil rises to near \\$100 amid improving US economy](#)

SINGAPORE – Oil prices closed in on \$100 a barrel Friday in Asia amid expectations an improving U.S. economy will boost demand for crude.

[Oil May Rise on Middle East Geopolitical Tension, Survey Shows](#)

Crude oil may rise next week on speculation that further sanctions against Iran will curb supply from the world’s third-largest oil exporter, a Bloomberg News survey showed.

Twelve of 32 analysts, or 38 percent, forecast oil will gain through Dec. 30. Ten respondents, or 31 percent, predicted prices will drop and 10 estimated there will be little change. Last week, 53 percent of surveyed analysts expected an increase. Oil is up 25 percent this quarter, the biggest gain since the second quarter of 2009.

[Shale gas is shaving bills](#)

In the raging shale-gas debate, there is much disagreement about the economic benefits of drilling.

An Ohio State University report released this week argues that industry-funded studies hype the number of jobs created in Ohio from drilling the Utica and Marcellus Shale

formations. The 27-page study is already providing ammunition to anti-drilling activists, who believe that the environmental risks of shale gas outweigh the economic benefits.

While rival academics can argue about which econometric model is better at predicting the future, a relatively narrow measure of the benefit of shale gas is already affecting our monthly utility bills.

[Q1 2012: The Safest Places to Invest](#)

Here are some predictions for 2012:

- \$2,000 gold, \$40 silver, and \$150 oil on any Strait of Hormuz disruptions;
- No recovery for housing;
- The euro will finally fail;
- The Dow will test 9,500;
- Israel will attack Iran;
- Natural gas will fall to historic lows on the Marcellus Shale finds;
- The Great Depression 2.0 and/or the Great Revolution of 2012 will hit as Americans become even more disgruntled over the deceptions of Wall Street;
- Facebook will withdraw its IPO based on the performance of other social networking IPOs;
- Rare earth prices will run up again, as China just barred the world's largest rare earths producer, Baotou Steel, from exporting due to “environmental concerns” (Baotou accounts for just about half of the world's rare earth production, and was excluded from the Chinese Ministry of Commerce's list of 11 approved exporters for next year); and
- Peak Oil deniers will finally understand what Peak Oil really is.

[Americans continue to buy less gasoline](#)

U.S. fuel demand in November dropped, pulled lower by a decline in gasoline consumption, the American Petroleum Institute said.

Total deliveries of petroleum products, a measure of demand, declined 1.1% to 18.8 million barrels a day last month from a year earlier, the industry-funded group said today in a report. Year-to-date consumption has averaged 19 million barrels a day, down 0.7% from the same period in 2010.

[US and UK drivers cutting back on mileage](#)

American cars are traditionally, big, brash and eye-wateringly inefficient. Research suggests that the pursuit of fuel efficiency, for one reason or another, is changing all this.

[More Americans to hit the road this holiday, AAA predicts](#)

U.S. airlines are expecting the smallest number of holiday travelers in years, as more Americans choose to travel by car.

[India aims to boost oil stockpile](#)

India plans to increase its stockpile of oil in the aftermath of the Arab Spring as conflict in source countries such as Libya has shaken the government's faith in the security of supply.

[China: riot police fire tear gas at power station protesters](#)

Chinese riot police fired tear gas to disperse a throng of protesters in a small town in southern China on Friday, the fourth day of demonstrations against the construction of a power station.

[Tear gas fired at Sudan dam demo: witnesses](#)

Sudanese police fired tear gas to disperse about 200 students who demonstrated on Thursday in support of residents displaced by the giant Merowe dam, witnesses said.

It was the second time this week police forcefully broke up a rally over the hydroelectric project.

[Egyptians rally after days of deadly clashes](#)

CAIRO (AP) — Several thousand Egyptians rallied in Cairo's central Tahrir Square Friday to denounce violence against protesters, especially outraged by images of women protesters dragged by their hair, beaten and kicked by troops.

[As Russia Braces for New Protests, Anger at Suspect Election Results Persists](#)

According to the official election results, Putin's party got just under 50% of the vote, barely allowing it to keep its majority in parliament. But it may actually have been as low as 30%, if the detailed accounts released by election officials, monitors, pollsters and journalists are to be believed. If so, that means the party would have needed to falsify an incredible 12 million votes.

[Russian oil rig sinking casts doubt on Arctic plan](#)

MOSCOW (AP) — The sinking of a floating oil rig that left more than 50 crew dead or missing is intensifying fears that Russian companies searching for oil in remote areas are unprepared for emergencies — and could cause a disastrous spill in the pristine waters of the Arctic.

[Chevron, Transocean Face Brazil Indictment Over Oil Leak](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Chevron Corp., the operator of the Brazilian offshore well that triggered oil leaks, and rig owner Transocean Ltd. will defend executives threatened with criminal indictments in the South American nation.

[Chevron, Conoco Entrapped in Post-BP Crackdown on Oil Slicks](#)

Brazil's threatened indictment of Chevron Corp. and Transocean Ltd. executives after offshore oil leaks shows that regulators from the North Sea to the Indian Ocean are stepping up scrutiny after BP Plc's 2010 disaster.

[100 miles of oil: Spill likely Nigeria's worst in decade](#)

LAGOS, Nigeria — Oil from an offshore spill has spread roughly 100 nautical miles after a leak occurred while loading a tanker, a Nigerian official said Thursday.

Royal Dutch Shell shut down a deep-water oil field off Nigeria's oil-rich southern delta on Tuesday.

[Consumers have more options to reduce energy bills](#)

States and utilities are spending more on energy-efficiency programs such as home energy audits. At the same time, an array of energy-saving products arrived this year, such as LED light bulbs that replace incandescents and the Nest thermostat that automatically adjusts heating or cooling when no one's home.

[Approval of Reactor Design Clears Path for New Plants](#)

WASHINGTON — The Nuclear Regulatory Commission unanimously approved a radical new reactor design on Thursday, clearing away a major obstacle for two utilities to begin construction on projects in South Carolina and Georgia.

[Canada hunts for rare earth metals as China cuts back](#)

A steep decline in Chinese exports of rare earth metals used in many hi-tech gadgets has forced a global search for new crucial supplies and hopes are high for major finds in Canada, analysts say.

[Saudis kicking off major move into solar](#)

Saudi Arabia will take the first step to becoming a large-scale producer of solar power next year as it uses the private sector to build a first batch of solar parks.

A steep increase in demand for electricity and rapidly falling prices for photovoltaic panels have convinced decision-makers in the kingdom to reduce their reliance on fossil fuel-based power generation, setting the scene for sustained investment in alternative energy.

[Foxconn's Entry Into Solar May Cut Margins for Chinese Makers](#)

Foxconn Technology Group's decision to start making modules for solar power plants may speed the rate at which margins are narrowing for Chinese manufacturers, hurting an industry already coping with a plunge in prices.

[Charities give Christmas gift of water](#)

December donors who open their hearts and wallets will send millions of dollars flowing to villages and urban slums in Africa, South Asia and Central America.

And, drop by drop, lives are changed. Countless children are spared killer waterborne diseases. Countless women are spared backbreaking hours fetching water in 40-pound, 5-gallon plastic jugs.

[Iran Navy to Hold War Games Near Crucial Sea Lanes](#)

Iran put neighbors on notice Thursday that it was about to conduct vast naval exercises in the Arabian Sea, including war games near the Strait of Hormuz, a vital shipping lane for international oil traffic.

[S.Sudan seeks food and farmland investments](#)

JUBA (Reuters) - South Sudan hopes to attract investors from Gulf Arab states, Israel, China and fellow African countries to boost production of basic food items, a government official said on Thursday.

[A Call to Protect Humble Fish, for Seabirds' Sake](#)

When people talk about the environmental effects of salmon aquaculture, they usually focus on water pollution and the spread of disease to wild fish stocks. But there is another big problem: It takes more than a pound of fish to produce a pound of salmon.

[China: Stricter Air Pollution Monitoring Standards to Start Next Year, With Results Made Public in 2016](#)

China will introduce stricter air pollution standards next year to monitor tiny particles of pollution in Beijing and other cities, but it may not start releasing the results to the public until 2016, state news media reported Thursday.

[The 12 most-read 2011 articles in Environment](#)

The environment section covers issues which raise debate such as those concerning climate change, green living and nature. Here we take a look at the most popular articles of the year followed by an insight from our environment editor as he chooses his favourite stories.

[A visualisation of Europe's energy - interactive](#)

This interactive visualisation, created by the Open Knowledge Foundation, shows how energy is produced and consumed across Europe. It demonstrates how widely European countries vary in terms of their reliance on energy imports, their renewable generation and the CO2 emissions created by their energy production.

[Africa: Climate Zombie Tripped By Dying Carbon Markets](#)

Looking back now that the dust has settled, South Africa's COP17 presidency appears disastrous. This was confirmed not only by Durban's delayed, diplomatically-decrepit denouement, but by plummeting carbon markets in the days immediately following the conference's ignoble end.

[China threatens trade war over EU jet emissions tax](#)

The "environmental squeeze" that helped prompt British Airways owner IAG's takeover of BMI is set to ignite a trade war between China and Europe after the EU's top court upheld a move to charge airlines using the Continent's airspace for their greenhouse gas emissions.

Beijing yesterday threatened disruptions to trade with the EU after the European Court of Justice ruled on Wednesday that the emissions tax would go ahead as planned on 1

January. The move added China's voice to that of America, which last week warned that it would take "appropriate action" if the proposed charges were not amended or delayed.

[A real sea change](#)

International diplomats met two weeks ago at the UN Durban Climate Change Conference in South Africa to discuss a greenhouse gas reduction plan—displaying no urgency to reach any meaningful agreement. Meanwhile, researchers at the American Geophysical Union annual meeting in San Francisco are reporting what many scientists have suspected for a long time but have been thus far not been able to prove convincingly—that the world's sea level is likely to rise by at least 3 feet in the next 100 years.

The vast Greenland ice sheet is melting at an increasingly rapid rate—much faster than most conservative estimates made by, among other authorities, the UN's own Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). In the last decade, scientific technologies have made fast advances toward more confident and precise measurements of the complex changes in the Greenland ice sheet.



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