



Drumbeat: May 26, 2012

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[Q. and A.: Linking People's Needs to Nature's](#)

It has been a generation since the rise of environmental economics. Yet even after years of groundbreaking research and support from governmental agencies and nonprofits, the work of such economists has tended to be tangential to the aims of most large conservation organizations. But in the last few years Peter Seligmann, the founder and chairman of Conservation International, has made a major strategic change in his \$250 million organization.

After two decades of emphasizing the preservation of "hot spots," or areas with a high level of biodiversity that are threatened with development, the group refocused on efforts to link environmental conservation to the economic self-interest of surrounding communities and countries. The move cost the 25-year-old organization some members, he acknowledges.

[Oil Rises on U.S. Consumer Confidence, Iran Inspections](#)

Oil rose on reports showing that U.S. consumer confidence gained and the United Nations' atomic agency found evidence Iran boosted its output of enriched uranium that could be used for a nuclear weapon.

Futures increased for a second day as the Thomson Reuters/University of Michigan final index of consumer sentiment advanced to 79.3, the most since 2007. Iran almost doubled its supply of 20 percent-enriched uranium, to 145 kilograms (320 pounds) since February, the International Atomic Energy Agency said today in a restricted 11-page report seen by Bloomberg.

[Cheaper gas spurs more travelers this Memorial Day](#)

NEW YORK – More Americans will hit the road this holiday weekend than a year ago. And they'll have a bit more money to spend thanks to lower gas prices.

Memorial Day kicks off the summer travel season, and since pump prices never reached \$4 or \$5 a gallon, as feared, economists says travelers are likely to dine out or shop more once they pull off the road.

[Mexico Oil Hedging Costs Rose 44 Percent Last Year](#)

Mexico, the third-largest supplier of oil to the U.S., paid \$1.17 billion last year to lock in prices for 2012 exports at \$85 a barrel, a 44 percent increase compared to hedging costs paid the previous year.

[Myanmar power protests put new reforms to the test](#)

BANGKOK—Protests in Myanmar over persistent power shortages have provided a test of how the country's elected but military-backed government will respond to rising expectations sparked by the past year's democratic reforms. Small demonstrations over the last week in Myanmar's two largest cities and several towns could be seen as an indicator of the new openness under President Thein Sein, who has overseen the country's emergence from decades of authoritarian rule and diplomatic isolation.

[China plans to exploit power-shortage protests in Burma](#)

Burmese people have been suffering power shortage for more than two decades. Although the military-dominated regime gains a large sum of hard currency by exporting the natural gas to neighbouring countries, it neglects sharing the indispensable power supplies to its citizens for twenty years.

[Gas prices this summer? Same as last, says expert](#)

Why have prices been declining lately?

"Crude oil prices went too high," Oil Price Information Service Chief Oil Analyst Tom Kloza explained on "CBS This Morning: Saturday."

"Basically, gas prices were too high. We get sloppy drunk every year, the trading community, and this was no exception."

[Fairbanks gasoline prices rise despite sharp drop in crude oil](#)

FAIRBANKS — A couple of months ago the gasoline price in Fairbanks was about 40 cents per gallon above the U.S. average.

Today it is about 75 cents per gallon above the national average.

Since Tesoro refines 80 percent of the gasoline in Alaska at Kenai and has three refineries on the West Coast, the recent price spike in Alaska may be fallout from the situation in California and Washington, where gasoline prices have also increased.

[Low natural gas prices continue to drive commodity chemicals industry](#)

The U.S. commodity chemical industry that manufacture chemicals linked to natural gas are expected to have a strong 2012, according to a Moody's report issued today.

The rapid growth of natural gas supply and low prices are driving the commodity chemicals boom domestically, even as economic slowdowns in Europe and China may well dampen the industry's performance worldwide.

[Obama gets boost as gas prices drop](#)

"I think whenever you see gas prices decline, you will see these campaigns and parties switch to a different message, because that energy message doesn't have the same bite it would have if energy costs were high," said GOP strategist Tyler Harber, a partner with Harcom Strategies.

"I think you will see gas prices and energy start to disappear from the daily message attacks from Romney and the Republicans until the gas prices begin to spike again," Harber said.

[Nitish tells UPA come clean on oil price hike](#)

Patna/New Delhi (ANI): Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Saturday hit out at the Congress-led UPA over the petrol price hike, and said that the ruling government is putting the blame on oil companies to avoid the responsibility and come out clean.

"There has been an increase in the price of petrol. The Centre has taken this decision. Now, when there is revolt on this issue in the entire country, they are putting the blame on oil companies to avoid the responsibility and come out clean. It is for the first time in the history of this country that there has been so steep increase in the price of petrol," said Kumar.

[From Canada Down To Argentina, The Oil Flows](#)

As the wind whips across the scrub grass in southern Argentina, a crane unloads huge bags of artificial sand for oil workers preparing for the hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, of a well.

Water mixed with chemicals and tiny ceramic beads are then blasted underground at high pressure. This mixture helps create fissures, allowing oil and natural gas to flow.

Energy analysts believe there are billions of barrels of oil and gas buried in a desert-like patch in Patagonia.

[Why Shell is betting billions to drill for oil in Alaska](#)

This summer, the energy giant will begin exploring off the icy coast of Alaska -- after years of resistance by environmentalists. The payoff could be the largest U.S. offshore oil discovery in a generation.

[Feds Invest In Deepwater Drilling Tech](#)

The Department of Energy has selected 13 projects to enhance the environmental safety of deepwater drilling projects, particularly by improving the cement casing process that investigators cited as a cause of BP's Deepwater Horizon spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010.

[US Firmly Backing Nabucco Pipeline despite BP Criticism](#)

The support of the USA for the European gas transit pipeline Nabucco is unwavering regardless of British Petroleum declaring the project unviable.

[Gazprom eyes new partners for Shtokman gas project](#)

(Reuters) - The chief executive of Russian gas giant Gazprom said on Friday it is seeking new partners for the Shtokman gas project, which has been repeatedly delayed on disagreements over investment volumes.

Alexei Miller also declined to directly address media reports that Shell may join the project.

[Iran Doubles Enriched-Uranium Stockpile, Goes Beyond 20%](#)

Iran increased its output of enriched uranium that world powers are concerned may eventually be used for a nuclear weapon, according to International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors.

[Gas project to be sped up in South China Sea](#)

CNOOC Ltd, the listed unit of China National Offshore Oil Corp, the country's biggest offshore oil producer, plans to accelerate the development of the Liwan gas project in the South China Sea with its partner Husky Energy Inc.

[Icahn Buys Stake in Chesapeake, Seeks Board Replacements](#)

Billionaire investor Carl Icahn bought a 7.56 percent stake in Chesapeake Energy Corp. and demanded new directors amid growing shareholder concern about management of the second-largest U.S. natural-gas producer.

[Turkmen leader sacks fifth energy minister in five years](#)

ASHGABAT: Turkmenistan President Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov has sacked his oil and gas minister for incompetence, the fifth time in five years that he has dismissed the number one energy official, state media said Saturday.

Oil and Gas Minister Bayramgeldi Nediroy was fired "for serious shortcomings in his work", according to a decree published in government newspaper Neutral Turkmenistan.

[Regulators: Oil leak in Alberta not all contained](#)

Regulators in Canada are investigating a substantial leak of oil and water from a feeder pipeline in the western province of Alberta and say the leak is not yet completely contained.

[Top Senate Democrat predicts no big energy changes this year](#)

Bingaman has been unsuccessfully pushing for adoption of a nationwide clean energy standard that would force power utilities to generate an increasing share of their electricity from sources that emit low greenhouse gas emissions.

But Bingaman, the head of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, now concedes the political headwinds are too strong to push an ambitious clean energy standard bill through Congress this year.

[Coal plant operators find a convenient scapegoat in the EPA](#)

When in doubt, blame the EPA.

That's becoming the mantra of some Texas coal plant operators, who have found the federal Environmental Protection Agency the legal and financial equivalent of a rented mule – an unpopular bureaucracy they can berate as the cause of all their problems.

[Cuban, U.S. scientists breaking through some political barriers](#)

Cuban and American scientists have joined forces to protect wildlife and to study Caribbean weather patterns that fuel hurricanes, and in the process, they're chipping

away at a half-century of government feuding, helping to bring the nations together for talks on vital matters such as what to do in case of an oil spill.

[Author Jeff Rubin on The End of Growth and titlesake Richard Heinberg](#)

High-energy Toronto author and blogger Jeff Rubin admitted that California-based author Richard Heinberg was “somewhat surprised” to hear from Rubin directly that both men had books at various stages of development called *The End of Growth*.

“He was somewhat surprised, admittedly,” the former CIBC chief economist told the *Georgia Straight* in a sit-down interview on May 24. “I guess I would be if I was in that situation, too. But I just thought, it would just be too weird if I didn’t tell him.”

[Wheat Fields Parched By Drought From U.S. To Russia](#)

(Bloomberg News) Droughts withering wheat crops from the U.S. to Russia to Australia will probably spur the biggest reduction in global supply estimates since 2003 and drive prices to the highest in almost a year.

Kansas, the top U.S. grower of winter wheat, is poised for its driest May on record, the state's climatologist estimates. Ukraine and Russia, accounting for 11 percent of world output, have endured drought conditions for three months, University College London data show. The U.S. Department of Agriculture may cut its global crop estimate by 1.2 percent next month, the biggest drop in a June report since 2003, according to the average of 18 analyst estimates compiled by Bloomberg.

[Beef, chicken, pork prices still climbing](#)

DENVER — The money you’re saving on gasoline may go toward buying steaks, ribs and chicken for the barbecue.

Meat prices are expected to rise faster than overall food costs in 2012. Prices rose in the spring and may increase an additional 1 percent to 3 percent this summer. Grill masters will find bargains harder to come by as retailers attempt to recoup some of their higher costs.

[Brazil: President Vetoes Major Parts of Bill to Open Up Forests](#)

President Dilma Rousseff on Friday vetoed portions of Brazil’s new Forest Code, a bill drafted to open big areas of protected forests to large-scale agriculture. The decision by Ms. Rousseff, which removes 12 articles from the bill, alters legislation sought by powerful agricultural groups.

[Area's sea-level rise has fastest rate on the East Coast](#)

ONLY — An inaugural interactive workshop discussing historic and future sea level trends and their implications for Virginia's Eastern Shore is planned for June.

"We've got the highest rate of sea level rise on the East Coast," said Skip Stiles, executive director, Wetlands Watch, who will be making a presentation on the historic, current and future sea level changes and potential impact on the Eastern Shore.

[Time To Prepare: Rising Sea Levels Threaten Connecticut Coast](#)

Tropical Storm Irene hammered the houses in the low-lying Cosey Beach area of East Haven last August. Now, according to town officials, most of those homes are being rebuilt.

This is understandable. But is it wise?

[Poll: Majority of N.J. residents call climate change a 'real concern,' want government to take larger role](#)

After a year of erratic weather, a large majority of New Jersey residents consider climate change and global warming a real concern — and they also expect government to start taking a bigger role in protecting the environment, according to a Kean University/NJ Speaks poll released today.

[Book review: Michael Mann's 'The Hockey Stick and the Climate Wars'](#)

When it comes to key warriors in America's battle over the causes of climate change, few rival Pennsylvania State University professor Michael E. Mann. Mann, who directs the Penn State Earth System Science Center, led a 1998 reconstruction of temperature records going back thousands of years and showing that global averages had shot up in recent decades.

Featured in a 2001 report by the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the chart resembled a hockey stick, with the ancient temperatures running along the handle and the latest figures rising sharply at the base. It sparked intense debate over the human contribution to global warming and transformed Mann from a geeky geophysicist into a public fighter in a bruising political and legal war over how to conduct science and public policy.

[Key question at climate talks: Is China poor?](#)

BONN, Germany -- Another round of U.N. climate talks closed Friday without resolving how to share the burden of curbing man-made global warming, mainly because

countries don't agree on who is rich and who is poor.

China wants to maintain a decades-old division between developed and developing countries, bearing in mind that, historically, the West has released most of the heat-trapping gases that scientists say could cause catastrophic changes in climate.

But the U.S. and Europe insisted during the two-week talks in Bonn that the system doesn't reflect current economic realities and must change as work begins on a new global climate pact set to be completed in 2015.

[U.S. cut its carbon emissions in 2011 – but China erased the gains](#)

Yes, it's true: Americans are slowly starting to tackle global warming. U.S. carbon emissions dropped 1.7 percent last year, according to the International Energy Agency. But that only went so far. Thanks to China's fast growth, the world's greenhouse-gas emissions hit record highs in 2011.



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