



Drumbeat: August 15, 2012

Posted by [Leanan](#) on August 15, 2012 - 10:19am

[Water shortages hit US power supply](#)

As the United States' extended heat wave and drought threaten to raise global food prices, energy production is also feeling the pressure. Across the nation, power plants are becoming overheated and shutting down or running at lower capacity; drilling operations struggle to get the water they need, and crops that would become biofuel are withering.

While analysts say the US should survive this year without major blackouts, more frequent droughts and increased population size will continue to strain power generation in the future.

[Oil Declines in New York Amid Signs of Higher U.S. Supply](#)

Crude oil in New York slipped from the highest close in a week amid signs that supplies are increasing in the U.S., the world's largest consumer.

West Texas Intermediate futures dropped as much as 0.7 percent. Crude inventories rose 2.78 million barrels last week to 367.1 million, the American Petroleum Institute said yesterday. This contrasts with forecasts for Energy Department data due later today. The department may report that stockpiles fell by 1.5 million barrels, according to a Bloomberg News survey. North Sea Brent traded at a premium of more than \$20 a barrel to WTI for a fourth day.

[2012 gas prices head for record](#)

Gasoline prices are up sharply in the past month on surging crude oil costs and refinery woes, and now are likely to make 2012 the costliest year ever at the pump.

[Consumer prices remain unchanged in July](#)

WASHINGTON (AP) – U.S. consumer prices were unchanged in July from June, as a small drop in energy costs offset slightly higher food prices, the government said Wednesday.

The consumer price index hasn't changed since March, evidence that the weak economy is keeping inflation in check.

[OPEC Chief Says Members Should Rein In Oil Output](#)

OPEC must rein in output in line with the agreed ceiling of 30 million barrels a day, OPEC Secretary-General Abdalla Salem el-Badri was quoted as saying by the Gulf Oil Review.

[Whatever Happened to Peak Oil?](#)

Why are peak oil-ers like Jehovah's Witnesses? Answer: When the definitive JW prediction of the 'Day of Wrath' failed in 1914, they did what false prophets have done in every generation: shifted the goalposts (to 1975 in the case of JW's—and wrong again). It's what false prophets *do* to save face, enabling them to keep fleecing the inherently gullible. Peak-oilers do likewise.

[The End of Peak Oil?](#)

Since the end of 2011, as more deep-sea Brazilian oil and oil recovered through hydraulic fracturing (fraking) comes online, I'm guessing that the rate of increase in proven reserves will only increase for the next few decades.

Furthermore, I predict that the once all-important distinction between "conventional" and "unconventional" oil will break down over time. As technologies improve for very deep drilling (measured in miles rather than feet), such wells will become more common. Fraking will become more common as a strategy for rejuvenating oil fields that had been considered depleted.

[Taqa counts the cost of slide in gas prices](#)

Falling natural gas prices in North America led to a big drop in profits and revenues in the second quarter of the year for the Abu Dhabi National Energy Company, better known as Taqa.

[Dubai aims to spend to cut its gas bill](#)

Dubai is hoping to buy overseas energy assets in an attempt to reduce its bill for importing gas.

The emirate relies heavily on imports to meet its energy needs and is paying a high price for liquefied natural gas (LNG) bought at fluctuating prices on the international markets.

[China to protest after Japan arrests activists on disputed island](#)

HONG KONG/TOKYO (Reuters) - China said it would lodge a complaint with Japan after it detained Chinese activists who landed on a disputed island and raised a flag on Wednesday, as tension between Japan and its neighbors escalated on the anniversary of the end of World War Two.

[‘Window Is Still Open’ to Avoid Iran Strike, Panetta Says](#)

The “window is still open” for diplomacy to resolve the dispute with Iran over its nuclear program, U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said.

Panetta’s remarks to reporters today at the Pentagon follows comments from Israeli officials that time has about run out to avert military strikes. Israel’s ambassador to the U.S., Michael Oren, wrote August 7 in the Wall Street Journal that the window of opportunity for negotiations “is now almost shut.”

[Oil exporters to avoid dire straits](#)

Iranian threats to block the waterway crossed by a third of global maritime crude exports have led Arabian Gulf producers to focus on ways to circumvent the bottleneck.

Strategic pipelines - old and new - have received much attention from governments in recent months, but years of neglect have left this mode of transport ill-equipped to cope with a serious disruption in tanker exports.

[Insurance Deal Lets India Resume Shipping Iran Oil](#)

India has joined Japan in offering government-backed insurance for ships carrying Iranian crude in order to bypass European sanctions that have nearly halved Iranian oil exports to key markets.

The first Indian ship to carry oil from Iran with Indian insurance is scheduled to load up in Iran on Wednesday, a shipping company executive said. This is a breakthrough for the Indian government, which has scrambled to maintain vital Iranian oil imports after European sanctions blocked third-party insurance in July.

[BP Said to Seek \\$7.9 Billion Selling Gulf of Mexico Fields](#)

BP Plc is seeking as much as \$7.9 billion before tax payments for a group of Gulf of Mexico oilfields as it unloads assets following its 2010 spill in the region, two people with

knowledge of the matter said.

[Exxon, Shell-led group win \\$10 billion Ukraine gas project](#)

KIEV (Reuters) - Ukraine has selected a consortium led by ExxonMobil and Royal Dutch Shell to develop its Skifska gas and oil field in the Black Sea, a government minister said on Wednesday.

[Chevron fire ignited by idling rig?](#)

The Richmond refinery fire that sent more than 9,000 people to emergency rooms could have been touched off when a cloud of flammable vapor reached an idling and abandoned Chevron fire truck, investigators said Tuesday.

[For New Nuclear Chief, Concerns Over Plant Safety](#)

ROCKVILLE, Md. — The new chairwoman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has good news and bad news for the nuclear power industry.

The good news is that although an impasse over the storage of nuclear waste now threatens some of the industry's routine activities, the chairwoman says she believes that a permanent repository can be set up eventually.

The bad news is that she considers the industry's evaluation of earthquake vulnerability — an issue that was once believed to be settled when a nuclear power plant was licensed — to be inadequate.

[Cheapism: The best budget hybrid cars](#)

When it comes to cars, “going green” demands a lot of green. Eco-friendly hybrids carry sticker prices thousands of dollars higher than their gasoline-only counterparts. Buyers also can no longer claim the federal tax credits offered in recent years to help bridge the gap. Of course, many hybrids boast outstanding fuel economy, which can combine with other factors, such as depreciation, to more than make up for the higher initial purchase price over the life of the car.

[Frito-Lay expands all-electric delivery truck fleet](#)

Frito-Lay's California electric truck fleet is growing and once all of the new vehicles are deployed by the end of this year, California will be home to 105 all-electric delivery trucks, the largest deployment in any state.

[Pertamina's Geothermal Push Gets a Price Boost](#)

Pertamina Geothermal Energy, a subsidiary of state energy firm Pertamina, plans to develop another eight geothermal projects after the government announced that the electricity price from geothermal power plants would be increased to make the sector more attractive.

[In Fragmented Brazilian Forest, Few Species Survive](#)

New survey methods indicate that computer projections of surviving species vastly overstated their presence. And five large mammal species had essentially been wiped out.

[Belo Monte Dam Suspended by High Brazilian Court](#)

Federal Judge Souza Prudente of the Federal Tribunal of Brazil's Amazon region suspended all work today on the Belo Monte Dam, invalidating the project's environmental and installation licenses.

[Mine Plan Puts Two Kentucky Fixtures on Collision Course](#)

Coal supplies 96 percent of Kentucky's electricity, most prominently in the eastern part of the state, where big coal producers reign. Here, two hours west of Louisville, it is still vital, though firms like Western Kentucky Minerals are smaller, locally owned and entrenched — neighborly coal, in their view. Still, the fight against it has been fierce, as all sides struggle to preserve traditions that have been intertwined for decades.

The process has revealed the shifting alliances between environmentalism and community-building. It has also, unexpectedly, shined a light on the changing ways of the Girl Scouts, who have 2,500 members here, children and adults.

[Romney, Obama in rare battle over energy policy](#)

BEALLSVILLE, Ohio/OSKALOOSA, Iowa (Reuters) - Republican Mitt Romney vowed to step up coal production and President Barack Obama mocked him for opposing a windmill tax credit, in a rare debate over energy policy on the campaign trail.

[Obama Administration Looking at Ethanol Rules](#)

The Obama administration is reviewing the country's ethanol policy amid calls from both political parties and the United Nations to suspend annual targets as the worst drought in 56 years spurs corn prices.

[Food crisis strengthens EU biofuel critics, may hasten deal](#)

BRUSSELS/AMSTERDAM, Aug 15 (Reuters) - Drought-stricken crops and record-high grain prices have strengthened critics of the European Union biofuel industry, adding fears of a food crisis to their claims that it does not ultimately reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

The renewed anxiety adds to pressure on the EU's executive Commission to forge a deal this year to help ensure that EU biofuels do not clash with food production or the environment.

[Superfund Cleanup Stirs Troubled Waters](#)

More than three decades after the program was established by Congress to clean up the most heavily polluted sites in the country, either by forcing those responsible to pay or by covering the cost with money from a special fund, the agency is now taking on the most expensive and most technically complex cleanups ever attempted — large stretches of urban waterways where the pollution is out of sight.

But there are lingering doubts about the best ways to handle such immense cleanups. “The public wants this stuff picked up and hauled away,” said Michael A. Barbara, the technical consultant for the businesses that are being held responsible for cleaning up the Passaic. “But the reality is that sometimes the process of stirring up this stuff does more harm than leaving it in place.”

[A Plea for Hunts Point: Invite Midsize Farmers](#)

On Tuesday, a broad coalition of 45 farms, environmental groups and other advocates jointly sent a letter seeking to put pressure on New York State and city officials to accommodate the region's midsize farms and add a new wholesale farmers' market at Hunts Point in their renovation plans.

[Desalination and the Israel-Palestine issue](#)

Regional water politics has once again featured Israel, this time with South Sudan, where Israel Military Industries Ltd., on behalf of the Israeli government, signed an agreement with the South Sudanese government to provide the latter with water infrastructure and technology development. The two countries agreed to co-operate on areas of desalination, irrigation, water transport and purification.

It would appear that one of the strategic advantages for Israel in pursuing such a deal, aside from a potential oil deal, is to be able to play a part in the hydro-politics of the Nile, creating a potential point of leverage over Egypt. Israel clearly has much to offer within the water infrastructure and technology sectors. And it leads one to ask questions about how the strides Israel has taken domestically in areas such as desalination will impact the Israel-Palestine water issue.

[New toilet technology after 150 years of waste](#)

SEATTLE – These aren't your typical loos. One uses microwave energy to transform human waste into electricity. Another captures urine and uses it for flushing. And still another turns excrement into charcoal.

They are part of a Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation competition to reinvent the toilet for the 2.5 billion people around the world who don't have access to modern sanitation.

[A Generational Stance on Behalf of the Arctic Ocean](#)

In less than a week, the Obama administration may well approve Shell Oil's plans to do exploratory drilling in America's Arctic Ocean. It would be an unmitigated disaster because there is no proven way to clean up an oil spill in the harshness of Arctic conditions. It should be stopped.

[Let's move toward a carbon-free economy](#)

A delightful poem by Goethe tells of a young apprentice who uses his master's magic to enchant a broom into fetching water for him. Soon the workroom is flooded as the uncontrollable broom works at lightning speed and can't be stopped. The lesson is that powerful spirits should only be called by the master himself. As the apprentice shrieked on his master's return, "Ah, here comes the Master! I have need of Thee! From the spirits that I called, Sir, deliver me!"

Modern technology has allowed us to unearth powerful fossil fuels — oil and coal — with energy densities exceeding any fuel that we can readily make on our own. These fuels are a gift of the earth, created over millions of years that we can't possibly reproduce or recreate. And yet the magic that they work, like the rebellious broom, has an uncontrollable side effect — the warming of the planet and the disruption of familiar weather patterns and trends.

[Wrong time to push fracking](#)

As this record-hot summer continues, Gov. Andrew Cuomo is purportedly nearing a decision about fracking. In support of his commitment to base his decision on the facts and science, I urge him to heed the warnings from two national stories this month. First, the U.S. Department of Agriculture designated more than half of all U.S. counties disaster zones, due to excessive heat and devastating droughts. Second, a new study — from top NASA scientist James Hansen — concludes the extreme heat and drought in the U.S. and around the world is due to global warming.

That's right: more than half of all U.S. counties are disaster zones, and NASA's top climate scientist believes that man-made global warming is to blame.

[FACTBOX-Key political risks to watch in Australia](#)

On July 1, Australia imposed a price on carbon emissions across its \$1.4 trillion economy, a bitterly contested law that may cost the prime minister her job.

[Talk Climate Change Solutions, Win Votes: Yale Study](#)

A new study from the Yale Project on Climate Change Communication finds that there are indeed a group of climate issues voters who will be more likely to support a candidate who's pro-climate. The report finds that "at the national level and among ten key swing states – taking a proclimate stand appears to benefit candidates more than hurt them with registered voters."

[Why we are poles apart on climate change](#)

So, if the cost of having a view of climate change that does not conform with the scientific consensus is zero, and the cost of having a view that is at odds with members of one's cultural community can be high, what is a rational person to do? In that situation, it is perfectly sensible for individuals to be guided by modes of reasoning that connect their beliefs to ones that predominate in their group. Even people of modest scientific literacy will pick up relevant cues. Those who know more and who can reason more analytically will do a still better job, even if their group is wrong on the science.

So whom should we 'blame' for the climate- change crisis? To borrow a phrase, it's the 'science-communication environment, stupid' — not stupid people.

[Survey finds 2 per cent of Canadians don't believe climate change is happening](#)

According to the survey, Prairie respondents are least likely to believe that climate change is occurring due to human activity, while residents of Quebec, Atlantic Canada and British Columbia are most likely to hold this belief.

[Climate 'Weirdness' Throws Ecosystems 'Out Of Kilter'](#)

Lemonick is the co-author of a new book, *Global Weirdness: Severe Storms, Deadly Heat Waves, Relentless Drought, Rising Seas, and the Weather of the Future*. The book, published by the nonprofit research organization Climate Central, details the effects of climate change and greenhouse gases in ocean acidity, existing ecosystems, disruptions to food supply and rising sea levels. Lemonick says sea level has risen by about eight inches overall worldwide since around 1900, and the waters are expected to rise an estimated three feet by 2100.

[What Country Faces the Worst Climate Change?](#)

The countries potentially facing the worst fates may not necessarily experience the greatest climate change, but instead lack the resources to cushion their people against climate-related disasters such as hurricanes, floods, heat waves and droughts. That has historically made a huge difference in rates of death or displacement from such events — Hurricane Jeanne killed just three people in the U.S. in 2004, but resulted in the deaths of more than 1,500 people in Haiti and displaced about 200,000 Haitians.

[ADB Warns Asia Of Urban Flooding By 2025](#)

BANGKOK (Bernama) -- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has warned that urban areas in Asia are at risk of climate change-borne inundations within 2025, expected to affect up to 350 million people, reports Thai News Agency.

Speaking to journalists Wednesday on the 2012 ADB report on key economic indicators for Asia and the Pacific, Changyong Rhee, ADB chief economist, said that urban areas in Asia are growing unexpectedly fast, with Asian urban people now almost accounting for half of the global population.

[Arctic sea ice heads for record low](#)

Going, going... Next month could see Arctic sea ice shrink to its smallest extent yet, beating the previous record, set in 2007. Any such record will be driven by unusual weather, but is also a result of underlying warming.



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