



Drumbeat: November 28, 2012

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[The New Future of Energy Policy](#)

The combination of declining oil use and a greater reliance on the global powergrid is going to shape energy and climate policy. Especially at a time when the concerns of climate change – or, rather, rising seas and the greenhouse dangers of fossil fuel dependency – are being increasingly raised. This will make for a rather muddled and complex array of diverging policy initiatives.

Moreover, as the oil-based economy (which was harder to meter) gives way to the electricity-based economy, policy makers will find there are more levers to shape energy demand in their economies. The Oil Age was a more natural fit for free-spirited individualism. **The Electricity Age will see an era more comprehensively dominated by policy, as the powergrid becomes the mechanism for governments to shape the future of energy demand.**

[Oil Trades Near One-Week Low on Supply Gain, U.S. Budget](#)

Oil traded near the lowest price in a week in New York amid signs of rising supplies in the U.S. and concern that lawmakers are struggling to reach agreement on how to address the nation's deficit.

West Texas Intermediate futures declined as much as 0.7 percent. An Energy Department report today may show crude supplies rose by 350,000 barrels to 374.8 million, according to a Bloomberg News survey. U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid said yesterday he was disappointed with progress made during congressional budget talks over \$607 billion in tax increases and spending cuts set to begin in January.

[Abu Dhabi's Taqa Buys BP North Sea Assets for \\$1.1 Billion](#)

Abu Dhabi National Energy Co. (TAQA) bought stakes in North Sea fields for \$1.1 billion from BP Plc (BP/), the energy producer that's disposing of assets in the wake of the 2010 Gulf of Mexico oil spill.

[Wildcatter Moffett's Davy Jones Well Bet Tests Investors](#)

“People call us pioneers. Well, that’s great, I guess, (though) some people say pioneers end up with arrows in their back.”

The speaker, in a tone that manages to be both self- deprecating and mildly defiant, is Jim Bob Moffett, chief executive officer of McMoRan Exploration Co. (MMR) -- serial wildcatter, incurable prospector, a man with a huge appetite for risks and an uncanny record of extracting big paydays from taking them.

[India Bets on Troubled Kashagan to Restart Oil Expansion](#)

India’s largest oil explorer is attempting to revive a stalled overseas expansion plan by buying into a \$46 billion project that’s eight years behind schedule and cost twice as much as expected.

[Cnooc-Nexen Deal ‘Moving Along’ as Canada Develops Policy](#)

Cnooc Ltd.’s \$15.1 billion bid for Canada’s Nexen Inc. is “moving along” as the federal government develops new foreign-investment guidelines while it reviews the bid from the Chinese oil producer, Alberta Premier Alison Redford said yesterday.

“I haven’t heard anything,” Redford said. “This is a decision the federal government will make. We understand that it’s moving along and everything is being considered.”

[Russia's LUKOIL joins rush to export Kurdish oil](#)

LONDON/BAGHDAD (Reuters) - LUKOIL has bought oil from Kurdistan, defying Iraq's ban on trade with its independent-minded region, but the Moscow firm has so far avoided the wrath of Baghdad, which hopes Russians may step in to tap its big fields further south as Westerners bail out. Exporting oil independently of the central government is the latest of many defiant moves by the Kurdish regional government, which also signed deals with oil majors like ExxonMobil of the United States to develop its resources.

[Energy the elephant in the room for Egypt](#)

Anyone following Egyptian economic news is probably aware that the government has signed a preliminary agreement with the IMF for a US\$4.8 billion (Dh17.63bn) aid package.

The cabinet revealed it is keen to finalise this deal as it believes global investors would perceive it as a stamp of approval on Egypt's economic programme - despite the current travails on the political front. One has to suspect the major issue has to do with subsidies in general and energy subsidies specifically, which seem to be the elephant in the room.

No one wants to risk the social implications of aggressively cutting the bill.

[Twin car bombings hit Damascus suburb](#)

Twin car bombs ripped through a Damascus suburb Wednesday, killing 34 people and leaving dozens critically wounded, according to Syrian state media and hospital officials.

The SANA news agency said two cars packed with explosives detonated at 6:45 a.m. local time Wednesday.

[Pollution-detecting aircraft hunts for gas leaks](#)

(Phys.org)—University of California, Davis, atmospheric scientist Stephen Conley is flying over the spine of California, tracing 600 miles of Pacific Gas and Electric Co.'s natural gas pipeline for methane leaks. Specialized instruments on Conley's plane allow UC Davis researchers to detect gas leaks several miles downwind from the source.

"What sets us apart is we use atmospheric science to solve the problem," Conley said. "We can do things with a little plane that you can't do any other way."

[BP Temporarily Suspended From Contracts With U.S. Government](#)

BP Plc, which pleaded guilty to criminal charges after the worst U.S. oil spill in 2010, will be temporarily suspended from winning new contracts from the federal government, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said today.

The EPA said the ban was imposed because the company's conduct during the Deepwater Horizon disaster showed a lack of integrity. The action, which doesn't affect existing contracts, will stand until BP can demonstrate it meets business standards set by the government, the EPA said.

[BP must beware joining list of extinct corporate dinosaurs](#)

Deepwater has left BP a tainted organisation in the United States, its biggest market and, according to recent analysis by the International Energy Agency, likely to become the world's biggest energy producer by 2017. "Debarring" BP from future US business remains a distinct possibility.

Jump from the US to Russia, currently the world's second-biggest oil producer, and the situation becomes even murkier.

[Senators Share Gas Hors d'Oeuvres to Break Impasse](#)

He took her to a solar-panel manufacturer in Oregon and a factory that makes a buoy to capture the energy of waves.

She showed off a natural gas export terminal in Alaska where they ate graham crackers dipped in a liquefied version of the fuel, part of a demonstration to showcase its benign properties.

Democrat Ron Wyden, who will take over as chairman of the U.S. Senate energy committee in January, and Lisa Murkowski, the panel's top Republican, say the tours to each other's home states cemented a warm bond between the two and taught them new lessons, such as the fact that a graham cracker soaked in liquid gas tastes like a graham cracker.

[Petrobras Ethanol Pipeline Pullback Raising Fuel Price](#)

Petroleo Brasileiro SA (PETR4)'s decision to suspend investment in a \$3.1 billion ethanol pipeline, the world's largest, is spurring speculation the project will be scaled back and fail to lower fuel prices at the pump.

Petrobras, as the state-run oil company is known, won't make payments next year for the 1,300-kilometer (808-mile) pipeline, according to sugar cooperative Copersucar SA, one of the six companies that co-own the project. An official at Petrobras in Rio de Janeiro declined to comment on the planned pipeline.

[Oil, gas boom lifts personal income in U.S.](#)

The energy boom and strong farm prices have reversed, at least temporarily, a long-term trend of money flowing to cities. Last year, small places saw a 3% growth in income per person vs. 1.8% in urban areas.

Small-town prosperity is most noticeable in North Dakota, now the nation's No. 2 oil-producing state. Six of the top 10 counties are above the state's Bakken oil field.

[Independent farms rake in millions](#)

NEW YORK (CNMoney) -- The American farmer might not be as poor as you think.

Despite the common notion that family farms have fallen on tough times and been pushed out by big agribusinesses, tens of thousands of families in the United States actually run multi-million dollar farming operations that produce the majority of the nation's food.

[Automakers gear up for a green holiday season](#)

If the upcoming L.A. Auto Show is any indication, American motorists are in for a green holiday season.

A preliminary estimate shows as many as 50 new cars, trucks and crossovers will make their debut during the annual event, the first big U.S. auto show of the 2013 model year.

[On the pros of nuclear power](#)

We should fund nuclear energy research now – or tomorrow we may not be able to turn the lights on.

[U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency reports being hacked](#)

The International Atomic Energy Agency acknowledged Tuesday that one of its servers had been hacked after a previously unknown group critical of Israel's undeclared nuclear weapons program posted contact details for more than 100 experts working for the U.N. nuclear watchdog.

[Desertec project puts spotlight on Mena region](#)

Desertec, the ambitious plan to turn Middle East sunshine into clean energy to be exported to Europe, is now looking closely at the energy needs of the Middle East and North Africa (Mena) region.

At the same time, the Arab League has woken up to the potential of alternative energy, and is studying the prospect of energy exports to Europe.

[Synthetic fuels could eliminate entire US need for crude oil, create 'new economy'](#)

(Phys.org)—The United States could eliminate the need for crude oil by using a combination of coal, natural gas and non-food crops to make synthetic fuel, a team of Princeton researchers has found.

Besides economic and national security benefits, the plan has potential environmental advantages. Because plants absorb carbon dioxide to grow, the United States could cut vehicle greenhouse emissions by as much as 50 percent in the next several decades using non-food crops to create liquid fuels, the researchers said.

[The Internet Wears Shorts](#)

Far from some meteorological phenomenon, the cloud is in fact a massive collection of warehouses jammed with rows and rows of power-sucking machines.

But once you've gotten past the fundamental realization that the cloud is a hulking, polluting, physical thing, there's another story to tell. It's the one about how some of the more forward-thinking Internet companies are coming up with wildly creative ways to cut down on all that waste. Facebook is building its latest data center at the edge of the Arctic Circle. An industry consortium is sponsoring a "server roundup" and handing out rodeo belt buckles to the Internet company that can take the largest number of energy-leeching comatose servers offline. And Google has saved huge amounts of energy by allowing its data center workers to wear shorts and T-shirts.

[New oil production techniques will speed up climate change](#)

Tar sands projects, fracking and gasification are part of a quest for 'extreme energy' puts both workers and the planet at risk

Whatever happened to peak oil? Only a few years ago it was common to hear speculation that global oil production had peaked and would slowly peter out—forcing capitalism to adapt its energy use. But by last year oil production was increasing again, especially in North America.

[How the myth of oil abundance impedes progress on climate change](#)

The great fear among those working to address climate change is that the seemingly vast resources of fossil fuels waiting to be burned will send the world hurtling toward certain catastrophe. By invoking fossil fuel abundance, climate activists believe that their argument for a rapid transition to alternative energy is made more persuasive. But, it is poor strategy to reinforce the myth of fossil fuel abundance when doing so actually makes many people less open to such an argument. And, as it turns out, the abundance argument is also contrary to the available data, logic and prudent risk management principles.

[Retracing Cuba's Special Period Crisis](#)

HAVANA TIMES — In Mostoles, Spain, something like the Alamar of Madrid (but with a lot more parks), a collective and self-management initiative known as the "Breaking the Cycle" the Institute of Transition" has carried out work for more than a year.

Over time, the issue of "Peak Oil," has become the focal point for consolidating a communitarian project since its practice seeks to contribute to post-capitalist social transformation.

[Are We Heading Toward Peak Fertilizer?](#)

You've heard of peak oil—the idea that the globe's easy-to-get-to petroleum reserves

are largely cashed, and most of what's left is the hard stuff, buried in deep-sea deposits or tar sands. But what about peak phosphorus and potassium? These elements form two-thirds of the holy agricultural triumvirate of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium (also known as NPK, from their respective markers in the Periodic Table of Elements). These nutrients, which are essential for plants to grow, are extracted from soil every time we harvest crops, and have to be replaced if farmland is to remain productive.

[Brazil reports continued decline in Amazon forest destruction](#)

BRASILIA (Reuters) - Brazil has something to tout at global climate change talks that began this week in Doha: destruction of the world's largest rainforest is still slowing at a record pace.

Data released Tuesday suggests destruction of Amazon woodlands has slowed to the lowest rate since monitoring began in 1988. The figures, based on Brazilian government data gathered by satellite imagery, mark the fourth straight year the overall deforestation levels have slowed.

[Drought-Parched Mississippi River Is Halting Barges](#)

Mississippi River barge traffic is slowing as the worst drought in five decades combines with a seasonal dry period to push water levels to a near-record low, prompting shippers to seek alternatives.

River vessels are cutting loads on the nation's busiest waterway while railroads sign up new business and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers draws criticism from lawmakers over its management of the river, which could be shut to cargo from companies including Archer-Daniels-Midland Co. (ADM) next month.

[After Drought, Reducing Water Flow Could Hurt Mississippi River Transport](#)

As part of an annual process, the Army Corps of Engineers has begun reducing the amount of water flowing from the upper Missouri River into the Mississippi, all but ensuring that the economically vital river traffic will be squeezed even further. If water levels fall low enough, the transport of \$7 billion in agricultural products, chemicals, coal and petroleum products in December and January alone could be stalled altogether.

"Without the river, we're in a world of hurt," said Kathy Mathers, a spokeswoman for the Fertilizer Institute. About half of the spring fertilizer that the industry sells to Midwestern farmers travels upriver, she said, and options to get the fertilizer to the fields by other means are few. "We know the rail cars aren't there," she said. The corps reduces water flow from the upper Missouri every year as part of its master plan for maintaining irrigation systems and meeting other water needs of the region, which stretches from Montana to St. Louis. This year the process began on Nov. 11, as the corps began reducing water flows from the Gavins Point Dam near Yankton, S.D. The flow has already been reduced from 37,500 cubic feet per second to 26,500, and will reach 12,000 by Dec. 11.

The plan, approved by Congress, has the power of law. “We do not have the legal authority to operate the Missouri River solely for the benefits of the Mississippi River,” said Monique Farmer, a spokeswoman for the corps.

[As Great Lakes plummet, towns try to save harbors](#)

The Great Lakes, the world's biggest freshwater system, are shrinking because of drought and rising temperatures, a trend that accelerated with this year's almost snowless winter and scorching summer. Water levels have fallen to near-record lows on Lakes Michigan and Huron, while Erie, Ontario and Superior are below their historical averages. The decline is causing heavy economic losses, with cargo freighters forced to lighten their loads, marinas too shallow for pleasure boats and weeds sprouting on exposed bottomlands, chasing away swimmers and sunbathers.

Some of the greatest suffering is in small tourist towns that lack the economic diversity of bigger port cities. Yet they are last in line for federal money to deepen channels and repair infrastructure to support the boating traffic that keeps them afloat.

[Looking to Cities, in Search of Global Warming's Silver Lining](#)

“There is a lot of emphasis on the mitigation of global warming, and we need that,” said Lewis H. Ziska, a plant physiologist for the Department of Agriculture, who is one of a growing number of scientists studying how plants react to elevated levels of greenhouse gases and other pollutants. At the same time, he added, “we need to think about the tools we have at hand, and how we can use them to make climate change work for us.”

Among the tools are cities, which have conditions that can mimic what life may be like in the temperate zone of a heated planet.

[Cities in the age of climate consequences: 'Carbon Zero', chapter 1](#)

Welcome to Grist's presentation of Alex Steffen's new book *Carbon Zero*. We'll be posting a new chapter every day for a week — here's [the full table of contents](#). This post will tell you a little more about the project.

[Climate cash debate rages as Doha summit opens](#)

The EU will not commit to renew climate funding which runs out at the year's end ahead of talks at the Doha climate summit, which opens today (26 November). But new climate aid may be announced in the conference's second week.

[Outcry Grows Over Canadian Govt's Undermining of Climate Science](#)

Federal researchers are on the front line of Harper's alleged 'war on science' as the country's oil ambitions clash with its scientific agenda.

[Obama shields U.S. airlines from EU carbon fees](#)

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - President Barack Obama signed a bill on Tuesday shielding U.S. airlines from paying for each ton of carbon their planes emit flying into and out of Europe, despite a recent move by Europe to suspend its proposed measure for one year.

The carbon fee bill was the first piece of legislation debated on the House floor after Congress returned from recess on November 13, and had been cleared by the Senate in September in a rare unanimous vote.

[California confronts a sea change](#)

Governors Andrew Cuomo of New York and Chris Christie of New Jersey don't need to wait on gridlocked Washington to confront future risks from climate-change intensified storms. They can instead look at how California is already moving forward on common-sense adaptations, and do it themselves. With 3.5 million Californians living within three feet of sea level, and the best available science projecting a 3- to 5-foot rise in sea level for the state by 2100, doing nothing would be irresponsible.

[World is able but not willing to cut greenhouse gas emissions, says UN body](#)

THE world already had the know-how to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases, linked to the overall rise in global temperatures, but did not have the political will, the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) said at the UN climate change talks in Doha on Wednesday morning.

[Thawing Permafrost Threatens to Intensify Warming](#)

Thawing permafrost threatens to intensify global warming, sending the planet beyond the 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) of increases that envoys at United Nations climate talks have set as a maximum.

Frozen soils that cover a quarter of the land area in the northern hemisphere contain 1,700 gigatons (1,700 billion tons) of carbon, twice the amount currently in the atmosphere, the UN Environment Program said today in a report released at the latest round of treaty negotiations in Doha.

[Seas rising faster than projected, low areas threatened: study](#)

DOHA (Reuters) - Sea levels are rising 60 percent faster than U.N. projections, threatening low-lying areas from Miami to the Maldives, a study said on Wednesday.

The report, issued during U.N. talks in Qatar on combating climate change, also said temperatures were creeping higher in line with U.N. scenarios, rejecting hopes the rate had been exaggerated.

[Climate "changing before our eyes" - World Meteorological Organization](#)

DOHA (Reuters) - The fact that Arctic sea ice has melted this year to its lowest recorded level shows, along with other weather extremes, that "climate change is taking place before our eyes", the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said on Wednesday.

The first 10 months of 2012 were the ninth-warmest since records began in the mid-19th century, with early months cooled by a "La Nina" weather event in the Pacific, according to the report, issued at global climate change talks in Doha.



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