



Drumbeat: April 19, 2013

Posted by [Leanan](#) on April 19, 2013 - 9:12am

[‘Peak oil’ fades, ‘fracking’ trends higher on Google searches](#)

Has peak oil peaked? Judging from the number of Google searches, it looks that way. On the other hand, the history of Google searches for terms related to hydraulic fracturing, or “fracking,” is on an upswing, although it ticked lower recently.

Viewing the search history of “peak oil” over time revealed that the last time it was a really popular search in the U.S. was around 2005. Fracking lies low until 2010, then it pops.

[Peak Everything Prophet Downgrades Peak Oil?](#)

Jeremy Grantham is a fascinating dude. He is a highly successful capitalist who blames capitalism for killing the planet. If you’re familiar with this “connoisseur of [market] bubbles,” as the *New York Times* referred to him in a profile, it’s probably due to his increasingly Malthusian outlook. In 2011, he warned that “accelerated demand” from developing countries was depleting the earth’s natural resources. He declared that we “now live in a different, more constrained, world in which prices of raw materials will rise and shortages will be common.”

This resource depletion (peak everything!), combined with global warming, poses an existential threat to civilization, Grantham argues. Though some of his recent peak claims have been questioned by experts and ridiculed by pundits, his message has deeply resonated with greens, peak oilers, and climate activists.

[The Limits of the Earth, Part 1: Problems](#)

The world is facing incredibly serious natural resource and environmental challenges: Climate change, fresh water depletion, ocean over-fishing, deforestation, air and water pollution, the struggle to feed a planet of billions.

All of these challenges are exacerbated by ever rising demand – over the next 40 years estimates are that demand for fresh water will rise 50%, demand for food will rise 70%, and demand for energy will nearly double – all in the same period that we need to tackle climate change, depletion of rivers and aquifers, and deforestation.

[The Limits of the Earth, Part 2: Expanding the Limits](#)

Ending growth isn't a realistic option. Billions of people in the developing world *want* access to more resources, *deserve* those resources as much as those of us in the rich world do, and *need* them in order to rise out of poverty. Growth won't end without a struggle. And that struggle could turn violent, as it has in the past.

There's only one acceptable way out of our current predicament. And that is to grow the total pie of resources available to the world's inhabitants. And a close look at the numbers and at the human history of innovation suggests this is possible.

[WTI Crude Advances for a Second Day as Brent Climbs Above \\$100](#)

West Texas Intermediate crude rose for a second day to trim its third weekly drop, the longest losing streak since November. Brent climbed above \$100 a barrel.

WTI advanced as much as 1.2 percent in New York. Prices increased the most in three weeks yesterday after the 14-day relative-strength index sank below 30 on April 17, a signal that the market is oversold, data compiled by Bloomberg show. Futures may decline next week on signs that economic growth is slowing, according to a weekly Bloomberg News survey.

[Opec worries remain despite oil prices topping \\$100 a barrel](#)

The quota has been notched up to include Iraq, but with a lack of individual quotas, Saudi Arabia pumping as it sees fit, and rebuilding nations such as Iraq and Libya pumping as much as they can, for now the target remains just that.

But ministers may want to think about curbing production to within the official 30 million barrels per day (bpd) as prices remain near or below \$100 - the preface to what some say is a market correction coming in the second half of this year.

[Tenders issued for Fujairah gas terminal work](#)

A gas import project that will help alleviate a supply crunch in Abu Dhabi is moving towards the construction stage, as tenders for key components of the offshore terminal have been issued.

Once completed, the floating terminal will be moored off the coast of the northern emirate of Fujairah, and have the capacity to import 9 million tonnes of liquefied natural gas (LNG) per annum.

[BP delays Mad Dog Phase 2 oil project in U.S. Gulf](#)

(Reuters) - BP said it was delaying a major oil project in the Gulf of Mexico as rising costs make current development plans difficult to justify.

"The current development plan for Mad Dog Phase 2 is not as attractive as previously modeled, due largely to market conditions and industry inflation," the company said in a statement.

[Biggest LBO Collapse Seen as Boon to Texas Power Market](#)

As Texas warns of potential power shortages and blackouts this summer, the state's biggest electricity producer is teetering toward bankruptcy. That may turn out to be a boon to the \$34 billion Texas power market.

A reorganization of Energy Future Holdings Corp., which lost money because of low natural gas prices after the largest leveraged buyout, would probably leave its power-generating unit with less debt and more free cash to invest in improving output capacity, according to former Texas regulator Brett Perlman. Power demand in Texas is growing faster than supplies, which may force the state to call for conservation on the hottest days this year.

[Statoil finds new oil deposits in North Sea](#)

Norwegian energy giant Statoil has said it has found "significant" new oil resources in the North Sea.

The company estimates the discovery could yield between 40 and 150 million barrels of oil.

[Sabic to Cut About 1,050 Jobs, Close Some Assets in Europe](#)

Saudi Basic Industries Corp., the world's biggest petrochemicals maker, plans to cut about 1,050 positions and close some assets in Europe as the company responds to diminished demand.

Saudi Basic Industries, also known as Sabic, has started talks with works councils and trade unions on the plan, it said in a statement today. The job cuts will take place across Europe, a third of which will be contracting staff and two-thirds Sabic employees, it said.

[Blackstone Power Cable From Quebec to New York Approved](#)

Blackstone Group LP, the world's largest private-equity firm, won approval from state

regulators for a \$2.2 billion power line that would bring electricity to New York City from Quebec.

The New York Public Service Commission unanimously approved the 333-mile (531-kilometer) Champlain Hudson Power Express at a meeting in Albany today. The line, which would stretch from the Canadian border to Astoria, Queens, would be able to deliver 1,000 megawatts of electricity, about 10 percent of the city's needs. The project would send mostly hydropower from Quebec, the commission said.

[Polish PM Sacks Minister Over Gas Pipeline Confusion](#)

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk sacked his treasury minister Friday following confusion over a Russian proposal to build a gas pipeline on Polish territory, and said the country may need to create an energy ministry to implement a consistent energy policy, rather than have it scattered across ministries, listed companies and regulators.

[Wall St. Warms to Siberia as Largest Cash Hoard Beckons](#)

OAO Surgutneftegas, Russia's third- largest oil producer with a \$31 billion market value, for years has refused to disclose its cash position under international reporting standards or whether it holds its own shares.

That's no problem for Wall Street. FMR LLC's Fidelity Investments, Swiss manager Pictet & Cie, and BNP Paribas SA's assets management arm -- the three biggest foreign holders of the company's preferred stock -- all added shares, filings made by the funds in the last three months show.

They're counting on the Siberian oil driller to prove its financial strength this month when it publishes its first accounts under International Financial Reporting Standards. The Surgut, Russia-based company will reveal it holds \$28 billion in cash, according to the median estimate of a Bloomberg survey of 13 analysts. That's more than any of the world's largest oil companies. Chevron Corp. had \$21 billion at Dec. 31.

[Official: Iran Plans to Inaugurate Four New Oil Refineries by Yearend](#)

TEHRAN (FNA)- A senior Iranian energy official announced that the country plans to complete construction of four new refineries by the end of the current Iranian year (ends March 20, 2014).

"Iran will complete projects related to four refineries by the end of the current year," Managing Director of National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC) Alireza Zeighami said on Thursday.

He noted that Iran is now self-sufficient in fuel production after its international suppliers stopped selling gasoline to Tehran under the US-led western pressures.

[Manhunt underway for bombing suspect; one suspect dead](#)

BOSTON -- The city and parts of its suburbs were locked down Friday as the manhunt intensified for the surviving suspect in the Boston Marathon bombing, hours after the other suspect was killed in a dramatic firefight with police in nearby Watertown, authorities said.

The fugitive is Dzhokar Tsarnaev, 19, the brother of the dead suspect who was not immediately identified, law enforcement authorities told USA TODAY. Both suspects have been in the U.S. for about a year, living as legal U.S. residents in Cambridge, and authorities are reviewing their possible ties to Chechnya, an area of Russia plagued by Islamic insurgency said the official who is not authorized to comment publicly.

[Senate Panel Approves Obama's Energy Secretary Nominee](#)

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee approved the nomination of Ernest Moniz as secretary of the Energy Department, setting up a confirmation vote by the full Senate.

Moniz, whom President Barack Obama nominated for the position last month, heads the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Energy Institute and serves on the President's Council of Advisers on Science and Technology.

[Baker Hughes's profit drops 30% on weak revenue](#)

Baker Hughes Inc. posted a first-quarter profit that was down 30% from a year earlier as the oilfield services company reported lower revenue from its key North America segment, although results beat Street views.

An overproduction of natural gas has resulted in low prices and pushed energy companies to shift their operations to oil-rich shale, a transition that has resulted in inefficiencies and higher costs for oil-field service providers as they haul their crews to new, harder-to-tap fields. The transition has weighed on Baker Hughes's pressure-pumping business.

[Schlumberger Profit Falls on Lower North American Prices](#)

Schlumberger Ltd., the world's largest oilfield-services provider, said first-quarter profit fell on lower hydraulic fracturing prices in North America.

Net income declined to \$1.26 billion, or 94 cents a share, from \$1.3 billion, or 97 cents, a year earlier, Houston- and Paris-based Schlumberger said in a statement on Business Wire today. Excluding one-time items, the company exceeded the 98- cent average of 32 analysts' estimates compiled by Bloomberg.

[U.K.'s Bowland Shale Depth Means Wells Won't Mar Landscape](#)

The thickness of shale rock in northwest England will allow gas production with minimal disruption above the surface, the head of the explorer aiming to drill in the area said.

Shale in England's Bowland basin is about three times as thick as the Marcellus deposit in the northeastern U.S. according to a geologist at the U.K.'s Keele University. That will allow horizontal wells to be stacked on top of one another, minimizing the number of well-heads on the surface, said Francis Egan, chief executive officer of Cuadrilla Resources Ltd.

[State Department Said to Post All Keystone Comments](#)

The State Department will post all public comments on its review of the proposed Keystone XL pipeline on a website, reversing its position, according to a department official.

The department, which in March said it wouldn't release the comments, also will provide additional opportunities for public input during the National Interest Determination period, said Kerri-Ann Jones, assistant secretary of State for oceans and international environmental and scientific affairs.

[Keystone XL Supporters and Critics Square off in Nebraska](#)

TransCanada Corp.'s new route for its Keystone XL pipeline, aimed at easing residents' concerns, drew some of the same complaints at a hearing from activists and Nebraska landowners who said it remained a threat to land and water.

"We are amongst those with the most to lose and the least to gain from the Keystone XL pipeline," said Randy Thompson, a Nebraska rancher and chairman of the "All Risk, No Reward" coalition that opposes the pipeline to carry bitumen from Alberta's oil sands to refineries in the U.S. Gulf Coast.

[EDF May Let Talks for New U.K. Nuclear Plant Fail](#)

Electricite de France SA, which is negotiating to build the U.K.'s first new nuclear power plants in almost two decades, is preparing to allow the talks to fail because of a dispute over the price of electricity.

Chief Executive Officer Henri Proglio said the French utility isn't "in a hurry" to agree with the government the so-called strike price it will receive for power produced at the planned plant at Hinkley Point in southwest England.

[More faults may be seen as active under plant](#)

More faults may be regarded as active under the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear power plant in Niigata Prefecture, a survey by its operator, Tokyo Electric Power Co., showed Thursday.

[Exelon, Entergy Rise to Highest in 5 Months on Gas Price](#)

Exelon Corp. and Entergy Corp., the two largest U.S. nuclear power operators, rose to their highest in five months as increasing natural gas prices boost wholesale electricity rates.

Exelon, based in Chicago, climbed 0.8 percent to \$36.37 at 12:51 p.m. in New York, the highest price since Nov. 1. New Orleans-based Entergy gained 1.5 percent to \$70.23, the highest since Nov. 2. Both power producers have risen 9 percent in the past month, outpacing the Standard & Poor's 500 Utilities Index, which has increased 5.7 percent since March 18.

[Who's to blame for the middle class struggle?](#)

NEW YORK (CNNMoney) - The middle class is feeling squeezed, and they have plenty of blame to throw around. Some are very quick to point the finger at the poor. In fact, they were more resentful of the poor than the rich, big business and government.

[Jobs keep creeping out of downtowns](#)

The recession put the brakes on job growth but did nothing to reverse a decades-long trend: job sprawl.

Despite the economic slump, the share of metropolitan areas' jobs farther from downtowns increased from 2000 to 2010, according to Brookings Institution research out Thursday. The share of jobs located in or near a downtown declined in 91 of the nation's 100 largest metropolitan areas.

[America's jobs are moving to the suburbs](#)

NEW YORK (CNNMoney) - Despite a short reprieve during the recession, the number of jobs moving to the nation's suburbs grew over the last decade, potentially clogging roadways and reducing job access for the poor.

['Ferrari' train driving high-speed rail renaissance](#)

Rome, Italy (CNN) -- As chairman of Ferrari, Luca di Montezemolo is used to making things that move at breakneck speed. But rather than flashy sports cars for wealthy motor enthusiasts, the Italian businessman's latest high-velocity project aims to cater for the traveling masses.

The Italo train from NTV -- a passenger rail company of which di Montezemolo is also chairman -- is a high-speed service that has been dashing between Milan, Rome and other major Italian cities since April.

[Chevy Cruze diesel: 46 highway mpg, but only 27 in town](#)

Chevrolet says the diesel version of its Cruze compact sedan will be rated by the government at 46 miles per gallon on the highway, the best of any non-hybrid car.

But mileage ratings in the city and in city/highway mix aren't so spectacular.

City rating: just 27 mpg; mix, 33 mpg.

[A look under the hood: why electric car startup Fisker crashed and burned](#)

How did this do-gooder dream that was supposed to combine Silicon Valley-backed tech innovation, gorgeous design, and eco-friendly hot-rod cars turn out so horribly wrong for so many people? That's what I've tried to find out in a dozen interviews in recent weeks with people at the center of the Fisker story.

[Fisker Spent \\$660,000 on Each \\$103,000 Plug-in Car](#)

Fisker Automotive Inc. spent more than six times as much U.S. taxpayer and investor money to produce each luxury plug-in car it sold than the company received from customers, according to a research report.

[City CarShare Releases Annual Report on Carsharing Impact](#)

SAN FRANCISCO--(BUSINESS WIRE)--In honor of Earth Day 2013, City CarShare, the largest nonprofit carsharing organization in North America, released an environmental report detailing the organization's positive impact for the San Francisco Bay Area for 2012 and to-date. Results show that on Earth Day alone, 68,000 fewer miles will be driven on Bay Area roads due to City CarShare's transit-oriented carshare service. The organization reported that, in 2012, a total of 25 million fewer miles were driven overall due to City CarShare. Its positive impact on the local environment last year included a savings of 85 million fewer pounds of CO2 emissions and 4.3 million fewer gallons of gasoline used.

[Solarworld Drops to Nine-Year Low on 2012 Loss](#)

Solarworld AG, Germany's biggest solar-panel maker, fell to a nine-year low in Frankfurt after estimating a loss equivalent to half of its share capital.

Solarworld, based in Bonn, declined 27 percent to 67 euro cents by the close, the lowest level since December 2003, after saying it sees a 2012 net loss of 520 million euros (\$678 million) to 550 million euros under local accounting rules. The loss was mainly from writedowns on stakes in and loans to units and affiliates. Equity capital will be about minus 20 million euros to minus 50 million euros, it said in a statement.

[Why is the National Trust investing in renewables while fighting a windfarm?](#)

All praise to the National Trust for announcing on Thursday it would increase the use of renewable energies at its properties. The promise to produce more than half of its power and heat from heat pumps, wood, solar and hydroelectric power by 2020 is a model for all organisations.

But at the same time as cutting its use of fossil fuels it is actively opposing others who want to do the same on land adjacent to its own. As the largest environmental organisation in the UK, with 4 million members, its overall influence on the development of renewable energy is not benign.

[Green buildings can help India minimise power shortages](#)

New Delhi (IANS) The Indian government must set stricter norms and push for the development of energy-efficient buildings so that the country can minimise power shortages and curb burgeoning petroleum import bills, say experts.

"Power bills can be cut by almost 30 percent just by upgrading the buildings to energy efficient standards," Frances Beinecke, president, New York-based Natural Resources Defense Council, told IANS.

[7 tips for buyers looking for a green home](#)

If you're in the market to buy an eco-friendly dwelling, researchers say you should expect to pay more for a so-called green home. How much more depends on a number of factors, but in a recent study looking at data from 1.6 million California home sales from 2007 to 2012, University of California researchers found that green-certified single-family homes sold for \$34,800 more -- or 9 percent more -- than comparable homes that weren't certified green.

Green is in vogue. Amber Turner, a broker with Living Room Realtors in Portland, Ore., estimates that about three-quarters of her buyers begin their search with a strong interest in green, even if what they mean by green is vague.

[Missouri: Floods Predicted Along the Mississippi](#)

The Mississippi River, so low for much of the winter that barge traffic was nearly halted, could reach up to 10 feet above flood stage by the middle of next week in parts of Iowa, Illinois and Missouri, National Weather Service hydrologists said Wednesday.

[Dispute in Hamptons Set Off by Effort to Hold Back Ocean](#)

Across a section of this wealthy town, some residents, accustomed to having their way in the business world, are now trying to hold back the ocean.

But the flurry of construction on beachfront residences since the hurricane is touching off bitter disputes over the environment, real estate and class.

Some local officials said they were worried that the owners were engaging in an arms race with nature, installing higher and higher barricades that could rapidly hasten erosion — essentially sacrificing public beaches to save private homes.

[East Coast Rebuilding, But Vulnerable to Future Sandys](#)

NEW YORK — In the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy, local governments are rethinking how to best protect the U.S. coastline from storms and flooding, which appear likely to exert a larger toll as the result of sea level rise and climate change.

The coast is now much less protected for the next storm, because Sandy's storm surge and winds destroyed dunes, flood walls and other barriers, said Joe Vietri, director of coastal and storm risk management for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, at a news conference here today (April 17).

[Australia Urged To Formally Recognise Climate Change Refugee Status](#)

Australia, a close neighbour of small, low-lying South Pacific states at the frontline of climate change, should be the first country to formally recognise climate change refugees, the country's main refugee advisory body has said.

The Refugee Council of Australia has told the Australian government that it should create a new refugee category for those fleeing the effects of climate change so that they can be offered protection similar to those escaping war or persecution.

[Study: Warming could make Montana wine region](#)

MISSOULA, Mont. (AP) — Climate change warnings tend to focus on the losers, but

western Montana would come up a winery winner, according to a new scientific analysis of temperature trends.

"Winter temperatures have been a limit to vineyard growth in our state," said Gary Tabor, director of the Center for Large Landscape Conservation in Bozeman and one of the co-authors of "Climate Change, Wine and Conservation" in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. "So as we see our temperatures not being as Montanan as before, we're seeing the impact of climate change in how people look at agriculture. Folks in Oregon and Washington are looking at our vineyards here to expand production."

[South Florida assessing impact of climate change on roads, bridges, railroads, airports](#)

In August, Tropical Storm Isaac flooded neighborhood roads in central and western Palm Beach County, dumping a historic 15 inches of rain in a few hours. In November, Hurricane Sandy washed out a portion of State Road A1A in Fort Lauderdale.

South Florida transportation planners think these examples are the beginning of the impact that rising sea levels, strong storm surges and flooding are going to have on the region's transportation infrastructure.

"It's going to happen more often," said Roger Del Rio, a project coordinator with the Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization.

[States threaten lawsuit to force EPA to issue power plant rules](#)

Ten states have threatened to sue the Environmental Protection Agency, which missed an April 13 deadline to finalise rules on new power plant emissions, unless it issues guidelines promptly.

New York state Attorney General Eric Schneiderman issued a statement on Wednesday criticizing the agency for failing to complete its New Source Performance Standards to curb greenhouse gas emissions from new power plants despite President Barack Obama's pledge to combat climate change.

[Carbon-Intensive Investors Risk \\$6 Trillion 'Bubble,' Study Says](#)

Investors in carbon-intensive business could see \$6 trillion wasted as policies limiting global warming stop them from exploiting their coal, oil and gas reserves, according to a report.

The top 200 oil, gas and mining companies spent \$674 billion last year finding and developing fossil fuel resources, according to research by the Carbon Tracker Initiative and a climate-change research unit at the London School of Economics. If this rate continues for the next decade some \$6 trillion risks being wasted on "unburnable" or stranded assets, according to the report, released today.

[Fossil fuels and vested interests: a society in denial](#)

The report released by Lord Stern and thinktank Carbon Tracker paints a picture of society in denial. It shows we're pumping almost \$700bn (£458bn) of hard-earned savings and pensions annually into finding new reserves of fossil fuels, even though it's clear that almost all of those reserves will have to be written off to provide a decent chance of keeping the planet safe.

The ever-inflating "carbon bubble" is only part of the bigger picture, because most of the world's fuel – around three-quarters in total and almost all the oil and gas – is owned not by listed companies but by governments. And we don't need only to stop expanding the world's fossil fuel reserves; we also need to get used to the idea that we can't burn most of what we already have.

[How your pension is being used in a \\$6 trillion climate gamble](#)

Suppose you weren't worried that we humans are destroying our water supply and eroding our ability to feed ourselves by burning coal and gas and oil and hence changing climate. Suppose you thought that was all liberal hooey. What might worry you about fossil fuels instead? How about a six trillion dollar bet, including a big slug of your own money, on people not doing what they have said they are going to do, and that some have already sworn to do in law?

Six trillion dollars is what oil, gas, and coal companies will invest over the next ten years on turning fossil fuel deposits into reserves, assuming last year's level of investment stays the same. Reserves are by definition bodies of oil, gas or coal that can be drilled or mined economically. Regulators allow companies, currently, to book them as assets, and on the assumption that they are at zero risk of being stranded - left below ground, "value"unrealized - over the full life of their exploitation. Yet a report published today shows they are at very real risk of being stranded, and in large quantity.

[Australia's dirty little climate change secret](#)

Forget the carbon price, forget the opposition's Direct Action climate plan. Australia could probably meet its targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions without either, provided we did one thing. But you won't hear the politicians talk about it.

A statistical analysis by *Crikey*, based on data released this week, indicates that if Australia's high population growth rate were reined in, the country would already be meeting its targets to cut pollution. In fact, we'd probably be under those targets.

[Gorbachev sees global failure to address eco-risks](#)

GENEVA (AP) — Former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev on Thursday painted a dim picture of the world's environmental progress, two decades after he founded the environmental group Green Cross International.

Laying much of the blame on a lack of leadership and vision, he railed against governments for falling short on nuclear disarmament, waste, development and climate change.

[House removes limits on greenhouse gases](#)

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality will no longer have the authority to limit greenhouse gas emissions under a proposal the Texas House of Representatives passed on Thursday.

[Rise in U.S. Gas Production Fuels Unexpected Plunge in Emissions](#)

U.S. carbon-dioxide emissions have fallen dramatically in recent years, in large part because the country is making more electricity with natural gas instead of coal.

Energy-related emissions of carbon dioxide, the greenhouse gas that is widely believed to contribute to global warming, have fallen 12% between 2005 and 2012 and are at their lowest level since 1994, according to a recent estimate by the Energy Information Administration, the statistical arm of the U.S. Energy Department.



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