

The Week That Was: 2012-04-014 (April 14, 2012)
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The Science and Environmental Policy Project

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Quote of the Week:

"An elective despotism was not the government we fought for; but one in which the powers of government should be so divided and balanced among the several bodies of magistracy as that no one could transcend their legal limits without being effectually checked and restrained by the others." -- James Madison

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Number of the Week: 6,381 birds, 613 turtles, 497 mammals

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THIS WEEK:

By Ken Haapala, Executive Vice President, Science and Environmental Policy Project (SEPP)

Heartland Conference: The Heartland Institute's Seventh International Conference on Climate Change (ICCC-7) will take place in Chicago, Illinois from Monday, May 21 to Wednesday, May 23, 2012 at the Hilton Chicago Hotel, 720 South Michigan Avenue. The event will follow the NATO Summit taking place in Chicago on May 19-21. The Theme is Real Science, Real Choices. Open to the public, registration is required. <http://climateconference.heartland.org/>

Envisat: The largest Earth monitoring satellite went silent this week. The ten year old Envisat, operated by the European Space Agency, provided data on the earth's oceans, ice, land and atmosphere. In recent years its recordings of sea level change became erratic, showing sharp increases and declines, with a general decline since 2010. Yet the recalculated graphs show an increase after adjusting for drift. There seems to be difficulty with the data, both raw and calculated. The current increase in calculated sea levels is significantly larger than the estimates that would occur from ice melt from glaciers, Greenland and Antarctica as based on the GRACE satellites. Please see links under "Measurement Issues," and "Other Scientific News."

Continuing the Debate: Richard Lindzen has responded to his critics of his talk to members of the UK Parliament. He admits he made a small error. Among other issues, he states that even though the climate models are based on well-established physical principles, that is not sufficient to accept the results of the models. The models must be tested by observations, not by other models. Please see links under "Challenging the Orthodoxy."

United States Historic Climatology Network (USHCN): Roy Spencer performed a statistical analysis of the data from the USHCN and concluded that virtually all the warming since 1973 appears to be a result of adjustments NOAA made to the data, mainly in the 1995-97 timeframe. Please see link under "Challenging the Orthodoxy."

American Meteorological Society (AMS) Climate Statement: Joe D'Aleo reminds us that Monday, April 16, is the last day for members of the AMS to comment on the draft climate statement. D'Aleo considers the statement makes the IPCC attribution studies appear to be moderate. The statement can be found on the AMS web site under "Draft Statement Open for Member Comment: Climate Change." <http://www.ametsoc.org/>. Membership log in is necessary.

The Shale Gale: The Center for the National Interest is holding a series of small panel discussions on energy and energy innovation in conjunction with the Clean Air Task Force. The subject of the first discussion was "America: New Energy Superpower?" The panelists have held high-level positions in

government and in private industry and work for administrations representing both major political parties. Fred Singer and Ken Haapala of SEPP were invited to attend.

There was general agreement that the revolution of extracting oil and natural gas is real and will substantially change the energy picture of the US if not parts of the world. The revolution was driven by small and mid-sized oil and gas firms with no direct contribution from government or major integrated oil companies. Certainly, the technology takes advantage of programs such as Department of Energy programs in directional drilling and Department of Defense research in jet engines that was used to make electricity generating gas turbines more efficient; however, these technologies were adapted by the pioneering companies which were not directly supported.

With the new technologies, drilling costs are higher, but risks are down significantly. No longer is it necessary for a company to discover the location of a pool of oil or gas. Instead, it can drill horizontally, very accurately, along a layer of source rock and fracture it to extract oil or gas, in many cases both. The oil is a light, high grade fuel as compared with heavy oil from oil sands or similar deposits. The source rocks can be in multiple layers. That is, once a particular layer is not productive, a well can be to another, lower layer, if one exists. Further, wells can be drilled in multiple directions from one pad site.

In the view of the panelists, the US has energy independence in coal, is achieving energy independence in natural gas, and may achieve energy security in oil. That is, it would no longer need to import fuels from countries or areas that are considered unreliable. The Keystone pipeline extension offered enhanced energy security in oil. Perhaps that is why the Canadians were so surprised when the Administration denied permits for the project.

One of the issues raised was how transferable is the technology to countries such as Britain or Poland. The US has several characteristics that are not found in many other countries, including ownership of mineral rights, an independent drilling industry, and an extensive natural gas collection and distribution system. In the US, mineral rights generally belong to the owner of the land, unless they have been separated by deed. It is the drilling on private land that allowed for the Shale Gale while the Federal Government was curtailing drilling on government-owned lands. In many countries, mineral rights belong to the government or to vested interests that may not be favorable to drilling.

Further, the US has an extensive drilling industry. According to Baker Hughes which has counted drill rigs for decades, the US has 1950 operating rotary rigs as of April 13, Canada has 164 as of April 13, and the rest of the world (International) has 1192 as of March 2012. The robust US drilling industry is able to take advantage of changes in market conditions and locations for drilling wells. Few countries have a comparable system. http://investor.shareholder.com/bhi/rig_counts/rc_index.cfm

Natural gas, in particular, can be considered a regional fuel that is transported by pipelines, unless it is transformed to Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) and carried by ships, which is expensive. During World War II and afterwards, the US developed an extensive and highly integrated natural-gas pipeline system that has about 305,000 miles of pipeline with 1,400 interconnection points and 400 underground storage facilities. Yet, there is a problem of natural gas being “stranded,” away from a pipelines needed to transport it. Any nation wishing to take advantage of natural gas from shale would need an elaborate pipeline system. http://www.eia.gov/pub/oil_gas/natural_gas/analysis_publications/ngpipeline/index.html

Next week, TWTW will discuss some of the vulnerabilities of this promising oil and natural gas industry. Please see Article # 1, and links under “Questioning European Green” and “Oil and Gas the Past or the Future.”

It Must Be Global Warming: The US had the warmest March on record – more proof of global warming! Please see links under “Communicating Better to the Public – Make things up.”

Quote of the Week: The US Constitution was based on the premise that the division of powers would prevent one branch of government for acquiring too much power and thusly, the division of powers would protect individual liberties. It appears that the Supreme Court decision to greatly broaden the Clean Air Act to label non-toxic carbon dioxide emissions a pollutant, and the deference the Courts give to the EPA on legitimate science issues, has distorted the traditional balance of powers. Last week’s proposal by the EPA to stringently regulate CO2 emissions from coal-fired power plants will effectively kill off the industry that has served the nation since the 1880s.

Number of the Week: 6,381 birds, 613 turtles, 497 mammals. An article covering the second anniversary of the BP Blowout stated these were the totals of animals found dead, presumably over the past two years. There is no cause of death given. At the one-year anniversary, TWTW stated the Fish and Wildlife Service counted 2303 birds, 18 turtles, and 10 mammals as dead, with visible oil – a big distinction as to the possible influence of oil. Regardless of which number is used, it is clear that the ecological disaster was grossly overstated. For example, about 10,000 birds were collected as killed by wind turbines in the Altamont Pass in one year. No doubt, some effects of the spill will linger, but these are small. Please see Article # 3.

April Fools’ Award: Send in your nominees for the proposed SEPP April Fools’ Award to the government official or political leader who has done the most to expand government power, by falsely claiming it is scientifically justified based on the flimsiest scientific evidence.

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ARTICLES:

For the numbered articles below please see this week’s TWTW at: www.sepp.org. The articles are at the end of the pdf.

1, Cheap Natural Gas Heralds an Energy Revolution

By S. Fred Singer, American Thinker, Apr 11, 2012

http://www.americanthinker.com/2012/04/cheap_natural_gas_heralds_an_energy_revolution.html

2. The Ideology of Catastrophe

These are not great souls who alert us to troubles but tiny minds who wish us suffering if we refuse to listen to them.

By Pascal Bruckner, WSJ, Apr 10, 2012

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303815404577331651761806744.html>

3. Experts Weigh Spill's Lasting Effects

Marine Studies Raise Fresh Concern After Early Fears of Environmental Catastrophe From BP Disaster Failed to Materialize

By Tom Fowler, WSJ, Apr 12, 2012

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303624004577339943866694420.html?mod=ITP_pageone_1

4. Cap-and-Price-Fix

Carbon-permit trading was supposed to be a 'free-market' solution. So much for that now that prices are low.

Editorial, WSJ, Apr 11, 2012

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303772904577333531487110266.html?mod=WSJ_Opinion_LEFTTopBucket

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NEWS YOU CAN USE:

Challenging the Orthodoxy

Richard Lindzen: Response To The Critique Of My House Of Commons Lecture

By Richard Lindzen, GWPF, Apr 12, 2012

<http://thegwpf.org/the-climate-record/5437-richard-lindzen-response-to-the-critique-of-my-house-of-commons-lecture.html>

Former NASA scientists, astronauts admonish agency on climate change position

Joint letter to NASA Administrator blasts agency's policy of ignoring empirical evidence

Staff Writers, Plants Need CO₂, Apr 10, 2012

<http://www.plantsneedco2.org/default.aspx?act=Newsletter.aspx&category=In+The+News&newsletterid=53&menugroup=Home&AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1>

49 former NASA scientists go ballistic over agency's bias over climate change

By Staff Writers, Financial Post, Apr 11, 2012

<http://business.financialpost.com/2012/04/11/49-former-nasa-scientists-go-ballistic-over-agencys-bias-over-climate-change/>

Climate Dissent Launches at NASA

By Peter C Glover, Energy Tribune, Apr 11, 2012

<http://www.energytribune.com/articles.cfm/10321/Climate-Dissent-Launches-at-NASA>

Dronning Maud Meets the Little Ice Age

By Willis Eschenbach, WUWT, Apr 13, 2012

<http://wattsupwiththat.com/2012/04/13/dronning-maud-meets-the-little-ice-age/#more-61228>

[SEPP Comment: Challenging the claim that during the end of the last ice age, CO₂ concentrations rose first, followed by temperatures.

Did Shakun et al. really prove that CO₂ preceded late glacial warming? [Part 1]

By Don Easterbrook, WUWT, Apr 8, 2012

<http://wattsupwiththat.com/2012/04/08/did-shakun-et-al-really-prove-that-co2-precede-late-glacial-warming-part-1/>

Ice And Fire In Climate Science

By David Whitehouse, The Observatory, Apr 11, 2012

<http://thegwpf.org/the-observatory/5425-ice-and-fire-in-climate-science.html>

A wise tutor once told me that if something is written down in a scientific textbook it is probably true, but if it is published in a journal then put it on probation.

[SEPP Comment: Addressing the paper that once the end of the last ice age started, increases in CO₂ concentrations preceded temperature increases.]

Proof that “climate disruption” is found all the way back to pre-industrial times

By Anthony Watts, WUWT, Apr 10, 2012

<http://wattsupwiththat.com/2012/04/10/proof-that-climate-disruption-is-found-all-the-way-back-to-pre-industrial-times/>

Defending the Orthodoxy

NASA rejects claim it endorses global warming

By Paul Bedard, Washington Examiner, Apr 11, 2012

<http://washingtonexaminer.com/politics/washington-secrets/2012/04/nasa-rejects-claim-it-endorses-global-warming/474416>

[SEPP Comment: No Jim Hansen here!]

Chu: Climate change evidence mounting

By Ben Geman, The Hill, Apr 11, 2012

<http://thehill.com/blogs/e2-wire/e2-wire/221045-chu-dispassionate-evidence-about-climate-change-mounts>

The administration plans to proceed with more loan guarantees, but other green-energy programs and EPA rules face hurdles.

[SEPP Comment: If one assumes the climate never changed before, then evidence of climate change is mounting.]

Dramatic climate change triggered by Earth's orbit

By Katie Lee, Cosmos, Apr 5, 2012 [H/t Warren Wetmore]

<http://www.cosmosmagazine.com/news/5488/dramatic-climate-change-altered-earths-orbit>

[SEPP Comment: Such articles discussing the distant past (55 million years ago) and attempting to relate it to the present; tend to ignore that the earth is in a period of ice ages, which started about 2.5 million years ago.]

Long-term studies detect effects of disappearing snow and ice

By Staff Writers, Washington DC (SPX), Apr 12, 2012

http://www.terradaily.com/reports/Long_term_studies_detect_effects_of_disappearing_snow_and_ice_999.html

Questioning the Orthodoxy

No Global Warming For 15 Years

By David Whitehouse, GWPF, Posted on ICECAP, Apr 7, 2012

http://icecap.us/index.php/go/political-climate/no_global_warming_for_15_years/

Atmospheric Aerosols and the Death of Nature

By Patrick Michaels, World Climate Report, Apr 11, 2012

<http://www.worldclimaterreport.com/index.php/2012/04/11/atmospheric-aerosols-and-the-death-of-nature/>

Carbon Dioxide in Perspective, Rice Grains

Malcolm Roberts, Galileo Movement, Apr 2012

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BC114geSTP8>

[SEPP Comment: Exceptional demonstration of the relationship of human emissions of CO2 to total atmosphere. Human emissions are increasing total CO2 and may result in some slight increase in temperatures.]

Questioning European Green

Clegg's green agenda will put us out of business

The Coalition's own energy policies are the real obstacles to efficiency

Editorial, Telegraph, Apr 11, 2012 [H/t GWPF]

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/telegraph-view/9197856/Cleggs-green-agenda-will-put-us-out-of-business.html>

[SEPP Comments: Typical politics. Blame the energy companies when the government's policies are increasing the price of energy to the public.]

Germany not buying Greek solar project

By Staff Writers, Athens, Greece (UPI) Apr 6, 2012

http://www.solardaily.com/reports/Germany_not_buying_Greek_solar_project_999.html

[SEPP Comment: Greek solar costs too much for Germany.]

MEPs prepare for battle over shale-gas drilling

Report says there is no need for EU law on shale-gas extraction.

By Dave Keating, European Voice, Apr 4, 2012 [H/t GWPF]

<http://www.europeanvoice.com/article/imported/meps-prepare-for-battle-over-shale-gas-drilling/74108.aspx>

Problems within the Orthodoxy

Climate Coalitions Crumble, Economic Worries to Blame

By Sterling Burnett, National Review Online, Apr 10, 2012 [H/t Warren Wetmore]

<http://www.nationalreview.com/planet-gore/295670/climate-coalitions-crumble-economic-worries-blame-sterling-burnett>

[SEPP Comment: Something else caused the failure, it could not have been our brilliant ideas.]

Seeking a Common Ground

Follow Up: Revisiting the 2010 IPCC Press Release on Economics of Disasters

By Roger Pielke, Jr, His Blog, Apr 9, 2012

<http://rogerpielkejr.blogspot.ca/2012/04/follow-up-revisiting-2010-ipcc-press.html>

[SEPP Comment: Will the IPCC ever set the record straight on its numerous misleading claims?]

Communicating Better to the Public – Exaggerate

Twice as Many Emperor Penguins as Thought in Antarctica, First-Ever Penguin Count from Space Shows

By Staff Writers, Science Daily, Apr 13, 2012

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/04/120413145303.htm>

[SEPP Comment: So much for claims by WWF and other alarmists that penguins are at peril.]

Communicating Better to the Public – Make things up.

Not just March, but start of 2012 shatter US records for heat, worrying meteorologists

By Seth Borenstein, AP, Apr 10, 2012

http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/not-just-march-but-start-of-2012-shatter-us-records-for-heat-worrying-meteorologists/2012/04/09/gIQA9Z4u5S_story.html

[SEPP Comment: See links immediately below.]

Attribution of the Warm Winter To Global Warming – An Example Of The Misstatement Of Reality By Some Climate Scientists

By Roger Pielke Sr, Climate Science, Apr 10, 2012

<http://pielkeclimatesci.wordpress.com/2012/04/10/attribubition-of-the-warm-winter-to-global-warming-an-example-of-the-mistatement-of-reality-by-some-climate-scientists/>

New Evidence Our Record Warm March was Not from Global Warming

By Roy Spencer, His Blog, Apr 13, 2012

<http://www.drroyspencer.com/2012/04/new-evidence-our-record-warm-march-was-not-from-global-warming/>

Claims Global Warming Increases Severe Weather Are Scientifically Incorrect.

By Tim Ball, A Different Perspective, Apr 11, 2012

<http://drtimball.com/2012/claims-global-warming-increases-severe-weather-are-scientifically-incorrect/>

Measurement Issues

USHCN Surface Temperatures, 1973-2012: Dramatic Warming Adjustments, Noisy Trends

By Roy Spencer, His Blog, Apr 11, 2012

<http://www.drroyspencer.com/2012/04/ushcn-surface-temperatures-1973-2012-dramatic-warming-adjustments-noisy-trends/>

Virtually all of the USHCN warming since 1973 appears to be the result of adjustments NOAA has made to the data, mainly in the 1995-97 timeframe.

Where Is the Hottest Place on Earth?

It Lies Somewhere Between Folklore and Science, the Desert and the City

By Michael Carlowicz, NASA Observatory, Apr 9, 2012

<http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/Features/HottestSpot/?src=eo-features>

[SEPP Comment: Global map shows the scarcity of measuring stations where the climate is hostile to humans.]

Envisat's satellite failure launches mysteries

By Anthony Watts, WUWT, Apr 12, 2012

<http://wattsupwiththat.com/2012/04/12/envisats-satellite-failure-launches-mysteries/#more-61214>

Changing Weather

A closer look at tornado data

Name withheld, ICECAP, Apr 8, 2012

<http://icecap.us/index.php/go/joes-blog/a-closer-look-at-tornado-data/>

[SEPP Comment: Tornadoes appear to becoming worse, but not for meteorological or climatological reasons, but for demographic reasons and the enhanced ability to identify and track them.]

Anchorage Alaska sets all-time seasonal snowfall record

Weather Service Press release and additional information, ICECAP, Apr 7, 2012

<http://icecap.us/index.php/go/joes-blog/anchorage-alaska-sets-all-time-seasonal-snowfall-record1/>

Changing Climate

Another Climate Feedback – The Influence Of Shrub Height In Tundra Regions On Northern High Latitude Climate”

By Roger Pielke, Sr, Climate Science, Apr 10, 2012

<http://pielkeclimatesci.wordpress.com/2012/04/10/another-climate-feedback-the-influence-of-shrub-height-in-tundra-regions-on-northern-high-latitude-climate/>

Historical Global Tropical Cyclone Landfalls

By Roger Pielke Jr, His Blog, Apr 9, 2012

<http://rogerpielkejr.blogspot.ca/2012/04/historical-tropical-cyclone-landfalls.html>

[SEPP Comment: No trends in intense tropical cyclones over the past 40 years.]

Changing Seas

Sea Level Data Corruption – Worse Than It Seems

By Steven Goddard, Real Science, Apr 11, 2012

<http://www.real-science.com/sea-level-data-corruption-worse-than-it-seems>

Corals 'could survive a more acidic ocean'

By Staff Writers

Brisbane, Australia (SPX) Apr 10, 2012

http://www.terraily.com/reports/Corals_could_survive_a_more_acidic_ocean_999.html

Changing Sea Ice

Amount of ice in Bering Sea reaches all-time record

By Lewis Page, The Register, Apr 11, 2012 [H/t GWPF]

http://www.theregister.co.uk/2012/04/11/bering_sea_ice_cover/

[SEPP Comment: May be related to a change in the Arctic oscillation.]

Changing Earth

Scientists Find Slow Subsidence of Earth's Crust Beneath the Mississippi Delta

By Staff Writers, Washington DC (SPX), Apr 09, 2012

http://www.terraily.com/reports/Scientists_Find_Slow_Subsidence_of_Earth_Crust_Beneath_the_Mississippi_Delta_999.html

[SEPP Comment: The claim of sea level rise of 3 to 5 feet is without any empirical basis.]

Agriculture and Fishery Issues & Fear of Famine

Task force recommends reducing global harvest of "forage fish"

By Staff Writers, Corvallis OR (SPX), Apr 10, 2012

http://www.terraily.com/reports/Task_force_recommends_reducing_global_harvest_of_forage_fish_999.html

[SEPP Comment: The finding may have validity, but the task force is self-appointed.]

Climate said threat to Asia's 'Rice Bowl'

By Staff Writers, Bangkok (UPI), Apr 12, 2012

http://www.seeddaily.com/reports/Climate_said_threat_to_Asias_Rice_Bowl_999.html

The Political Games Continue

New round of U.S. green energy loans?

By Staff Writers, Washington (UPI), Apr 6, 2012

http://www.energy-daily.com/reports/New_round_of_US_green_energy_loans_999.html

Litigation Issues

Okla. Attorney General Challenges Legality of EPA's Regional Haze Rule

By Staff Writers, Power News, Apr 12, 2012

http://www.powermag.com/POWERnews/4534.html?hq_e=el&hq_m=2422484&hq_l=10&hq_v=5e660500d0

Subsidies and Mandates Forever

Robbing Banks and Subsidizing Green Energy

By David Kreutzer, The Foundry, Apr 11, 2012 [H/t Randy Randol]

<http://blog.heritage.org/2012/04/11/robbing-banks-and-subsidizing-green-energy/>

EPA and other Regulators on the March

A Strategy to Stop EPA Science Abuse

By John Dale Dunn & Steve Milloy, American Thinker, Apr 11, 2012

http://www.americanthinker.com/2012/04/a_strategy_to_stop_epa_science_abuse.html

[SEPP Comment: Contrary to the EPA and its funded scientists, weak statistical associations do not establish causation.]

EPA's 'Carbon Pollution Standard': Bait-and-Fuel-Switch

By Marlo Lewis, Global Warming, Apr 13, 2012

<http://www.globalwarming.org/2012/04/13/epas-carbon-pollution-standard-bait-and-fuel-switch/>
[SEPP Comment: An example of how EPA twists language to expand its regulatory powers.]

EPA's Proposed CO2 Rule for New Power Plants: Coal First, Then ...

By James Rust, Master Resource, Apr 10, 2012

<http://www.masterresource.org/2012/04/epas-anti-coal-beachhead/#more-19546>

The EPA with Easter Egg on Its Face

By Marita Noon, Townhall, Apr 8, 2012 [H/t ICECAP]

http://finance.townhall.com/columnists/maritanoon/2012/04/08/the_epa_with_easter_egg_on_its_face/page/full/

Is the EPA Just Sloppy, or Cooking the Books?

By Jeffrey Folks, American Thinker, Apr 10, 2012

http://www.americanthinker.com/2012/04/is_the_epa_just_sloppy_or_cooking_the_books.html

Is the EPA Endangering Public Health and Welfare by Attempting to Mitigate Extreme Weather?

By Chip Knappenberger, Master Resource, Apr 9, 2012

<http://www.masterresource.org/2012/04/epas-regulation-endangering-public/>

[SEPP Comment: A bit tongue and cheek.]

Black carbon ranked number two climate pollutant by US EPA

By Staff Writers, Washington, DC (SPX) Apr 10, 2012

http://www.terradaily.com/reports/Black_carbon_ranked_number_two_climate_pollutant_by_US_EPA_99.html

Report to Congress on Black Carbon

EPA, March, 2012

Full Report: <http://www.epa.gov/airquality/blackcarbon/2012report/fullreport.pdf>

Executive Summary: <http://www.epa.gov/airquality/blackcarbon/2012report/ExecSummary.pdf>

[SEPP Comment: In 2005, in the US the most important sources are Transport (52%) and open biomass burning (35%). With regulations already promulgated, transportation sources are expected to decline by 86% by 2030. World-wide, China and India are the major emitters in 2000.]

Energy Issues – Non-US

Shale Puts Russia, Saudis on the Defensive

By Staff Writers, Energy in Depth, Apr 12, 2012 [H/t GWPF]

<http://www.energyindepth.org/shale-puts-russia-saudis-on-the-defensive/>

Oil Prices Hostage to Geopolitics

By Michael J. Economides, Energy Tribune, Apr 7, 2012

<http://www.energytribune.com/articles.cfm/10284/Oil-Prices-Hostage-to-Geopolitics>

Editor's note, this piece was originally published in China Daily

Energy: Refined out of existence

As petrol prices rise and western demand shrinks, refineries are closing across the developed world

By Gregory Meyer, Financial Times, Apr 9, 2012 [H/t Randy Randol]

<http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/256f583c-7a83-11e1-8ae6-00144feab49a.html#axzz1rgiIKJ00>

Energy Issues -- US

Victory is Within Reach

By Donn Dears, Power For USA, Apr 13, 2012

<http://dddusmma.wordpress.com/2012/04/13/victory-is-within-reach/>

[SEPP Comment: Energy independence is not needed for victory, energy security (against arbitrary change) is sufficient.]

Buying Your Own Refinery

By Geoffrey Styles, Energy Tribune, Apr 9, 2012

<http://www.energytribune.com/articles.cfm/10298/Buying-Your-Own-Refinery>

Oil and Natural Gas – the Future or the Past?

While We Dither On Oil, It's Drill, Beijing, Drill

Editorial, IBD, Apr 11, 2012

<http://news.investors.com/article/607461/201204111839/china-seeks-canadian-cuban-oil.htm>

Fracking Tied to Unusual Rise in Earthquakes in U.S.

By Mark Drajem, Bloomberg, Apr 12, 2012 [H/t Roger Cohen]

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-04-12/earthquake-outbreak-in-central-u-s-tied-to-drilling-wastewater.html?cmpid=yhoo>

[SEPP Comment: The seismic events probably would not be noticed on the West Coast.]

US Administration's Control of Oil and Gas

Restricting Supply To Boost Prices

Editorial, IBD, Apr 9, 2012

<http://news.investors.com/Article.aspx?id=607160&p=1&ibdbot=1>

Industry groups applaud Obama's natural gas executive order

By Andrew Restuccia, The Hill, Apr 13, 2012

<http://thehill.com/blogs/e2-wire/e2-wire/221429-industry-groups-applaud-obamas-natural-gas-executive-order>

Return of King Coal?

Coal exports surge to highest level since 1991

By Matthew Brown, AP, Apr 10, 2012 [H/t Timothy Wise]

http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/U/US_COAL_SURGING_EXPORTS?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT&CTIME=2012-04-10-14-27-17

Oil Spills, Gas Leaks & Consequences

Shell: Gulf oil sheen dissipating

By Kevin McGill, AP, Apr 12, 2012

<http://www.businessweek.com/ap/2012-04/D9U3KVE00.htm>

Search is on for source of US Gulf of Mexico oil sheen

By Staff Writers, Washington (AFP) April 12, 2012

http://www.energy-daily.com/reports/Search_is_on_for_source_of_US_Gulf_of_Mexico_oil_sheen_999.html

Nuclear Energy and Fears

EPRI Report Examines Technical Factors Leading to Cooling Loss at Fukushima

By Staff Writers, Power News, Apr 12, 2012

http://www.powermag.com/POWERnews/4537.html?hq_e=el&hq_m=2422484&hq_l=13&hq_v=5e660500d0

[SEPP Comment: The earthquake destroyed off-site AC power. The tsunami destroyed on-site AC power and back-up DC power, which were required to continue the electrical pumps for the liquid necessary for cooling the reactors, even though they were shut down. The tsunami was far higher than predicted because the earthquake models used for the design were inadequate.]

Nuclear Power's Death Somewhat Exaggerated

By Matthew Wald, NYT, Apr 10, 2012 [H/t Warren Wetmore]

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/11/business/energy-environment/nuclear-powers-death-somewhat-exaggerated.html?_r=2

CAP1400 test facility under construction

By Staff Writers, WNN, Apr 4, 2012

http://www.world-nuclear-news.org/NN-CAP1400_test_facility_under_construction-0404124.html

[SEPP Comment: When a computer model is not good enough. China testing an advanced nuclear power plant design based on the Westinghouse AP 1000 design.]

Study: Wildlife survive nuclear accidents

By Staff Writers, Portsmouth, England (UPI) Apr 11, 2012

http://www.terradaily.com/reports/Study_Wildlife_survive_nuclear_accidents_999.html

Alternative, Green (“Clean”) Solar and Wind

Best marketing for renewable energies

By Staff Writers, Ilmenau, Germany (SPX) Apr 09, 2012

http://www.energy-daily.com/reports/Best_marketing_for_renewable_energies_999.html

[SEPP Comment: Although not so intended, this article highlights the tremendous shortcomings of solar and wind generated electricity. Changing weather conditions may result in the need to run a small gas turbine or to run nine large conventional power plants – in a matter of days or even hours.]

World's biggest wind farm planned for off south coast of England

The world's biggest wind farm is being planned off England's south coast.

By Robert Mendick, Telegraph, Apr 8, 2012

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/energy/windpower/9192277/Worlds-biggest-wind-farm-planned-for-off-south-coast-of-England.html>

[SEPP Comment: Turbines has high as 670 feet.]

Mojave Solar Project Killing Threatened Desert Tortoises

By Staff Writers, NCPA, Apr 10, 2012

http://www.ncpa.org/sub/dpd/index.php?Article_ID=21796&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=DPD

Global green-energy investment drops

By Ben Geman, The Hill, Apr 12, 2012

<http://thehill.com/blogs/e2-wire/e2-wire/221183-report-us-political-and-policy-uncertainty-drives-down-green-investment>

[SEPP Comment: With the program of grants from the Treasury expired, Department of Energy loan guarantees expiring, and the production tax credit expiring at the end of 2012, it appears that the US may lose the “coveted” green top spot in a wasteful and expensive industry.]

Alternative, Green (“Clean”) Other

AFPM Says EPA Action on E15 Irresponsible

By Staff Writers, San Antonio TX (SPX) Apr 12, 2012

http://www.biofueldaily.com/reports/AFPM_Says_EPA_Action_on_E15_Irresponsible_999.html
[SEPP Comment: Requiring up to 15% ethanol in gasoline which may lead to damage in gasoline engines. This is bad news for consumers of food.]

DOE Announces \$30 Million Research Competition for Energy Storage Technologies

By Staff Writers, Power News, Apr 12, 2012

http://www.powermag.com/POWERnews/4536.html?hq_e=el&hq_m=2422484&hq_l=12&hq_v=5e660500d0

[SEPP Comment: Perhaps DOE is finally learning a little from DARPA. However the specifics are highly questionable. Military convoys do not move across the battlefield. They move in terrain occupied by hostile forces, but not the battlefield.]

Listening to the radio even with an electric drive

By Staff Writers, Berlin, Germany (SPX) Apr 09, 2012

http://www.spacemart.com/reports/Listening_to_the_radio_even_with_an_electric_drive_999.html

[SEPP Comment: A seldom discussed problem with electric vehicles.]

Smart grid's global reach set to top \$46B

By Staff Writers, Framingham, Mass. (UPI), Apr 9, 2012

http://www.energy-daily.com/reports/Smart_grids_global_reach_set_to_top_46B_999.html

Electricity suppliers are especially keen on smart meters because the appliance and networks give the companies greater control on consumers.

[SEPP Comment: It is all about control.]

Review of Recent Scientific Articles by NIPCC

For a full list of articles see www.NIPCCreport.org

Evolutionary Response to Environmental Change in Sockeye Salmon

Reference: Crozier, L.G., Scheuerell, M.D. and Zabel, R.W. 2011. Using time series analysis to characterize evolutionary and plastic responses to environmental change: A case study of a shift toward earlier migration date in sockeye salmon. *The American Naturalist* 178: 755-773.

<http://www.nipccreport.org/articles/2012/apr/10apr2012a1.html>

Water-Year Runoff of the Conterminous United States: 1900-2008

Reference: McCabe, G.J. and Wolock, D.M. 2011. Independent effects of temperature and precipitation on modeled runoff in the conterminous United States. *Water Resources Research* 47: 10.1029/2011WR010630.

Are Himalayan Glaciers Headed to Hell in a Handbasket?

Reference: Bali, R., Agarwal, K.K., Ali, S.N. and Srivastava, P. 2011. Is the recessionary pattern of Himalayan glaciers suggestive of anthropogenically induced global warming? *Arabian Journal of Geosciences* 4: 1087-1093.

<http://www.nipccreport.org/articles/2012/apr/10apr2012a3.html>

Amazonian Plant Extinctions

Reference: Feeley, K.J. and Silman, M.R. 2009. Extinction risks of Amazonian plant species. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, USA* 106: 12,382-12,387.

<http://www.nipccreport.org/articles/2012/apr/11apr2012a4.html>

[SEPP Comment: Land use changes are a greater threat to the Amazon forests than global warming.]

Health, Energy, and Climate

Fertilizer use responsible for increase in nitrous oxide in atmosphere

By Staff Writers, Berkeley CA (SPX) Apr 09, 2012

http://www.terradaily.com/reports/Fertilizer_use_responsible_for_increase_in_nitrous_oxide_in_atmosphere_999.html

Since the year 1750, nitrous oxide levels have risen 20 percent - from below 270 parts per billion (ppb) to more than 320 ppb.

Environmental Industry

The Environmental Terrorizing of Children

By Alan Caruba, Warning Signs, Apr 8, 2012

<http://factsnotfantasy.blogspot.com/2012/04/environmental-terrorizing-of-children.html>

Poisoning the Kids

By Robert T. Smith, American Thinker, Apr 12, 2012

http://www.americanthinker.com/2012/04/poisoning_the_kids.html

[SEPP Comment: The American Lung Association, which receives money from the EPA, is engaged in emotional advertising claiming the air is hazardous to children.]

Settlement Forces Cancellation of Georgia Supercritical Coal Plant

By Staff Writers, Power News, Apr 12, 2012

http://www.powermag.com/POWERnews/4533.html?hq_e=el&hq_m=2422484&hq_l=8&hq_v=5e660500d0

[SEPP Comment: Environmental groups destroying innovation in technology for use of coal. The Sierra Club takes pride in its efforts to increase the costs of coal plants and the utility bills of consumers.]

The Contradictions of Obamaism

As a faithful tool of the environmentalists, the president betrays his main constituents.

By William Tucker, American Spectator, Apr 6, 2012 [H/t Timothy Wise]

<http://spectator.org/archives/2012/04/06/the-contradictions-of-obamaism>

Other Scientific News

Biggest environment satellite goes silent

By Staff Writers, Paris (AFP), April 12, 2012

http://www.spacedaily.com/reports/Biggest_environment_satellite_goes_silent_999.html

Scientists refine Earth's clock

By Staff Writers, London UK (SPX) Apr 09, 2012

http://www.terradaily.com/reports/Scientists_refine_Earth_clock_999.html

What Triggers a Mass Extinction?

By Kimm Fesenmaier, Pasadena CA (SPX) Apr 13, 2012

http://www.terradaily.com/reports/What_Triggers_a_Mass_Extinction_999.html

[SEPP Comment: It was massive glaciations, not warming, that may have been the cause of the extinction that is attributed to climate change.]

Space Debris Remediation - Who Are We Kidding?

By Launchspace Staff, Bethesda MD (SPX) Apr 10, 2012

http://www.spacemart.com/reports/Space_Debris_Remediation_Who_Are_We_Kidding_999.html

Other News that May Be of Interest

Researchers Report Potential for a "Moderate" New England "Red Tide" in 2012

By Staff Writers, Woods Hole MA (SPX), Apr 13, 2012

http://www.terraily.com/reports/Researchers_Report_Potential_for_a_Moderate_New_England_Red_Tide_in_2012_999.html

[SEPP Comment: Perhaps sea food poisoning from the red tide is the source of the old New England saying do not eat shellfish in a month without a "R?"]

Fungus threat escalates for food, wildlife: scientists

By Staff Writers, Paris (AFP) April 11, 2012

http://www.seeddaily.com/reports/Fungus_threat_escalates_for_food_wildlife_scientists_999.html

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BELOW THE BOTTOM LINE:

Doomsday shelters line Kansas missile silo

By Staff Writers, Salina, Kansas (AFP), April 9, 2012

http://www.spacewar.com/reports/Doomsday_shelters_line_Kansas_missile_silo_999.html

[SEPP Comment: Recycling at its best.]

How Climate Change Makes Trees Sick

By Susan Frankel, NPR, Apr 12, 2012

<http://www.npr.org/local/stories/KQED/150533336>

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ARTICLES:

1, Cheap Natural Gas Heralds an Energy Revolution

By S. Fred Singer, American Thinker, Apr 11, 2012

http://www.americanthinker.com/2012/04/cheap_natural_gas_heralds_an_energy_revolution.html

All bets are off for the future of energy in the United States and, indeed, the world, as the price of natural gas plummets to ever-lower values -- thanks to the development of technology that can access gas and liquids trapped in hitherto inaccessible shale rocks. In 2011, shale gas accounted for a quarter of U.S. natural gas production. But this seemingly bright future may depend on a court decision (expected in June 2012) and, of course, on the outcome of the November elections.

The Economics of Natural Gas

Consider the history of natural gas prices just in the last few years. In mid-2008, the spot price (at Henry Hub) reached a peak of \$13 per mcf (1,000 cubic feet, with a heat value of 1 million Btu -- denoted as 1 MMBTU) -- having doubled since mid-2007. Since then, the price has decreased sharply, dipping to \$2 in mid-March, and it now stands at \$2.30. If prices decline further, natural gas will be cheaper than the average steam coal, which up until now has been the lowest-cost fuel on a heat basis.

How realistic is such a price path? Operators drilling for gas are also extracting large quantities of natural gas liquids (NGL) as well as crude oil. As pointed out by Richard Trzupek, the profit potential lies in these liquids, as natural gas becomes simply a byproduct. It reminds me of the situation in the early 1970s, 40 years ago, when "associated gas" was so cheap, only pennies per mcf, that it was flared at the well-head. The problem then was the lack of pipelines to convey the gas to consumers in major cities.

Electric Power Generation

With the pipeline problem solved (at least in the Lower 48), consider the consequences of having huge quantities of cheap gas available. It will make new coal-fired power plants uneconomic, but it will also make new nuclear plants uneconomic. (Coal and nuclear do have an important advantage over gas: the fuel can be easily stored -- while gas supply depends on the integrity of the pipeline.)

It is ironic that these two longed-for goals of radical environmentalists are being achieved simply through economics, without the need for any regulation. That's why I'm fairly relaxed about recent EPA demands for the removal of every last bit of mercury emission, which is clearly uneconomic for existing coal-fired power plants -- and even for new ones.

By the same token, it makes proposed EPA regulation of CO₂ emission for power plants largely academic. On a BTU basis, gas emits about half as much CO₂ as coal -- not that I regard CO₂ as a problem. On the contrary, agriculturalists consider higher CO₂ levels a positive benefit for enhancing crop growth. Forget about "problems" with CO₂ emission; our concern should be efficient utilization of natural resources. The new catchword is "sustainability," not "saving the climate."

The EPA's proposed regulation sets allowed CO₂ emission levels at 1,000 pounds/megawatt-hour, which would stop the building of new coal-fired power plants. In Virginia, Dominion Power is already building a 1,300-megawatt gas-fired plant. Of course, it is quite possible that the EPA will try to extend their regulation to include all coal-fired plants -- and then perhaps lower their arbitrary 1,000-lb limit to go after gas-fired plants -- part of an ill-advised campaign against all fossil fuels, based on pathological fears of imagined climate catastrophes.

But it is ironic also that cheap gas will completely remove the need for electricity generated by solar or wind -- much to the chagrin of environmental zealots. And all those folks hoping that energy prices would continue to rise and that electricity costs would "skyrocket" will be sorely disappointed.

But there are also extra bonus points. "Combined-cycle" gas power plants can reach efficiencies of 60% or more, compared to heat efficiencies of nuclear power plants of 35% or coal plants of 40%.

It gets even better than that. Gas-fired electricity generation is essentially non-polluting and user-friendly, and it can be placed in close proximity to wherever power is needed, making distributed generation economically feasible. For example, a large apartment building of 1,000 units could use its own 10-megawatt power plant. But once installed, it becomes possible to consider co-generation, with the waste heat used for space heating, air-conditioning, hot water, laundry, and other process-heat applications -- and even desalination. One can imagine energy efficiencies of as much as 80%, more than double what is achieved today. It would also simplify the problem of waste-heat disposal.

Cheap gas will encourage the petrochemical industry to invest \$30 billion in new U.S. plants over the next five years, according to Chevron-Phillips Chemical Co. Plastics producers will get a double-boost -- from cheaper feedstock gas, the raw material for their product, and lower electricity costs. When natural gas becomes really cheap -- say, less than \$2 per mcf -- it will become more like nuclear energy, where the main cost is not fuel, but the capital cost of the power plant.

So what needs to be done? The first step is to have a White House that strongly believes in the need for low-cost energy to promote economic growth, increase prosperity, and fight poverty. Electricity costs should "skyrocket" downward, not upward. While new gas-fired combined-cycle plants are being built, existing coal-fired and nuclear plants, representing "sunk costs," should be kept in operation for as long as possible.

Transportation Future

This leaves only transportation as a major energy consumer that needs to be addressed. On an interim basis, one might use liquefied natural gas (LNG) to fuel trucks, earth-movers, and perhaps even trains and aircraft. Intermediate-sized users, such as fleet vehicles, (SUV-sized) taxi cabs, buses, etc. could benefit economically by using compressed natural gas (CNG) -- with fuel costs only a fraction of conventional motor fuels.

But the ultimate solution for the majority of vehicles is still gasoline and diesel oil. And with natural gas prices really low, there is no longer an incentive to aim for highest conversion efficiency. Therefore, there is no need to think about ethanol, methanol, or exotic liquids like hydrogen, all of which would require a new distribution system and major adjustments to car engines. Instead, one can simply adapt existing commercial technologies, like Fischer-Tropsch, to convert natural gas directly into gasoline or diesel.

Even today's gas price is low enough -- about 15% on a BTU-basis -- to yield a substantial profit for conversion projects. No wonder that major GTL (gas-to-liquid) projects are planned or already underway in Qatar and other locations. It would seem to be a "no-brainer" investment -- with no need for government subsidies or loan guarantees.

What could go wrong?

Of course, there are various kinds of economic feedbacks, which cannot be quantified at this stage. Much depends on timing and on willingness to take investment risks. An increased demand for natural gas would slow or even reverse a price decline. The displacement of coal by natural gas will lower coal prices throughout the world and might encourage increased use.

There are other unknowns. A massive replacement of transportation fuels refined from crude oil with gas-derived liquids would exert strong downward pressure on world oil prices; it would make GTL projects less profitable. How will this, in turn, affect drilling for more shale gas and oil -- and their future price? And what about Arctic oil and gas? Will there be a push to explore and develop -- or will it go the other way? And when will the truly huge resource of gas hydrates in ocean sediments become technically and economically feasible?

The geopolitical consequences of a coming energy revolution are far-reaching and fascinating. Since the U.S. is a leading energy consumer and producer, much depends on the direction of U.S. energy policy. There would be major impacts on Middle East oil and Russian gas exporters and on trade balances of OECD nations (principally the U.S., Europe, and Japan). For example, Japan now depends on imported LNG (at \$15 per MMBTU) for electricity generation; the U.S. is getting ready to export LNG, at much lower cost.

But there are possible "show-stoppers" ahead -- for example, environmental regulations against "fracking" that could slow down the natural-gas boom. Or EPA insistence on costly "green" energy -- driven by unreasonable fears of climate catastrophes. An important decision point may come in June 2012 if the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia strikes down the EPA's "Endangerment Finding" (which attempts to treat CO2 as a "criteria pollutant" subject to the Clean Air Act) -- perhaps ending any legal restrictions on the emission of carbon dioxide and the use of fossil fuels.

The next and most important hurdle will be the November elections. They may bring about government leadership essential to assure the right business climate for a bright U.S. energy future, greater prosperity, and more jobs.

2. The Ideology of Catastrophe

These are not great souls who alert us to troubles but tiny minds who wish us suffering if we refuse to listen to them.

By Pascal Bruckner, WSJ, Apr 10, 2012

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303815404577331651761806744.html>

As an asteroid hurtles toward Earth, terrified citizens pour into the streets of Brussels to stare at the mammoth object growing before their eyes. Soon, it will pass harmlessly by—but first, a strange old man, Professor Philippulus, dressed in a white sheet and wearing a long beard, appears, beating a gong and crying: "This is a punishment; repent, for the world is ending!"

We smile at the silliness of this scene from the Tintin comic strip "L'Étoile Mystérieuse," published in Belgium in 1941. Yet it is also familiar, since so many people in both Europe and the United States have recently convinced themselves that the End is nigh. Professor Philippulus has managed to achieve power in governments, the media and high places generally. Constantly, he spreads fear: of progress, science, demographics, global warming, technology, food. In five years or in 10 years, temperatures will rise,

Earth will be uninhabitable, natural disasters will multiply, the climate will bring us to war, and nuclear plants will explode.

Man has committed the sin of pride; he has destroyed his habitat and ravaged the planet; he must atone.

My point is not to minimize our dangers. Rather, it is to understand why apocalyptic fear has gripped so many of our leaders, scientists and intellectuals, who insist on reasoning and arguing as though they were following the scripts of mediocre Hollywood disaster movies.

Over the last half-century, leftist intellectuals have identified two great scapegoats for the world's woes. First, Marxism designated capitalism as responsible for human misery. Second, "Third World" ideology, disappointed by the bourgeois indulgences of the working class, targeted the West, supposedly the inventor of slavery, colonialism and imperialism.

The guilty party that environmentalism now accuses—mankind itself, in its will to dominate the planet—is essentially a composite of the previous two, a capitalism invented by a West that oppresses peoples and destroys the Earth.

Environmentalism sees itself as the fulfillment of all earlier critiques. "There are only two solutions," Bolivian president Evo Morales declared in 2009. "Either capitalism dies, or Mother Earth dies."

"Our house is burning, but we are not paying attention," said Jacques Chirac, then president of France, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002. "Nature, mutilated, overexploited, cannot recover, and we refuse to admit it."

Sir Martin Rees, a British astrophysicist and former president of the Royal Society, gives humanity a 50% chance of surviving beyond the 21st century. Oncologists and toxicologists predict that the end of mankind should arrive even earlier, around 2060, thanks to a general sterilization of sperm.

One could cite such quotations forever, given the spread of apocalyptic literature. Authors, journalists, politicians and scientists compete in their portrayal of abomination and claim for themselves a hyperlucidity: They alone see the future clearly while others vegetate in the darkness.

The fear that these intellectuals spread is like a gluttonous enzyme that swallows up an anxiety, feeds on it, and then leaves it behind for new ones. When the Fukushima nuclear plant melted down after the enormous earthquake in Japan in March 2011, it only confirmed an existing anxiety that was looking for some content. In six months, some new concern will grip us: a pandemic, bird flu, the food supply, melting ice caps, cell-phone radiation.

The fear becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, with the press reporting, as though it were a surprise, that young people are haunted by the very concerns about global warming that the media continually broadcast. As in an echo chamber, opinion polls reflect the views promulgated by the media.

We are inoculated against anxiety by the repetition of the same themes, which become a narcotic we can't do without.

A time-honored strategy of cataclysmic discourse, whether performed by preachers or by propagandists, is the retroactive correction. This technique consists of accumulating a staggering amount of horrifying news and then—at the end—tempering it with a slim ray of hope.

First you break down all resistance; then you offer an escape route to your stunned audience. Thus the advertising copy for the Al Gore documentary "An Inconvenient Truth" reads: "Humanity is sitting on a time bomb. If the vast majority of the world's scientists are right, we have just ten years to avert a major catastrophe that could send our entire planet's climate system into a tail-spin of epic destruction involving extreme weather, floods, droughts, epidemics and killer heat waves beyond anything we have ever experienced—a catastrophe of our own making."

Here are the means that the former vice president, like most environmentalists, proposes to reduce carbon-dioxide emissions: using low-energy light bulbs; driving less; checking your tire pressure; recycling; rejecting unnecessary packaging; adjusting your thermostat; planting a tree; and turning off electrical appliances. Since we find ourselves at a loss before planetary threats, we will convert our powerlessness into propitiatory gestures, which will give us the illusion of action. First the ideology of catastrophe terrorizes us; then it appeases us by proposing the little rituals of a post-technological animism.

But let's be clear: A cosmic calamity is not averted by checking tire pressure or sorting garbage.

Another contradiction in apocalyptic discourse is that, though it tries desperately to awaken us, to convince us of planetary chaos, it eventually deadens us, making our eventual disappearance part of our everyday routine. At first, yes, the kind of doom that we hear about—acidification of the oceans, pollution of the air—charges our calm existence with a strange excitement. But the certainty of the prophecies makes this effect short-lived.

We begin to suspect that the numberless Cassandras who prophesy all around us do not intend to warn us so much as to condemn us.

In classical Judaism, the prophet sought to give new life to God's cause against kings and the powerful. In Christianity, millenarian movements embodied a hope for justice against a church wallowing in luxury and vice. But in a secular society, a prophet has no function other than indignation. So it happens that he becomes intoxicated with his own words and claims a legitimacy with no basis, calling down the destruction that he pretends to warn against.

You'll get what you've got coming! That is the death wish that our misanthropes address to us. These are not great souls who alert us to troubles but tiny minds who wish us suffering if we have the presumption to refuse to listen to them. Catastrophe is not their fear but their joy. It is a short distance from lucidity to bitterness, from prediction to anathema.

Another result of the doomsayers' certainty is that their preaching, by inoculating us against the poison of terror, brings about petrification. The trembling that they want to inculcate falls flat. Anxiety has the last word. We were supposed to be alerted; instead, we are disarmed. This may even be the goal of the noisy panic: to dazzle us in order to make us docile. Instead of encouraging resistance, it propagates discouragement and despair. The ideology of catastrophe becomes an instrument of political and philosophical resignation.

Mr. Bruckner is a French writer and philosopher whose latest book is "The Paradox of Love" (Princeton University Press, 2012). This article, translated by Alexis Cornel, is excerpted from the Spring 2012 issue of City Journal.

3. Experts Weigh Spill's Lasting Effects

Marine Studies Raise Fresh Concern After Early Fears of Environmental Catastrophe From BP Disaster Failed to Materialize

By Tom Fowler, WSJ, Apr 12, 2012

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303624004577339943866694420.html?mod=ITP_pageone_1

Scientists studying the environmental impact of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico are raising fresh concerns about the effect of the leaked crude on a range of sea life, from tiny animal plankton to dolphins.

So far, studies have not uncovered the ecological apocalypse that some feared after the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig exploded two years ago this month, unleashing the biggest offshore oil spill in U.S. history. But hopes that the Gulf would be relatively unaffected are dimming.

"The death and destruction that many predicted hasn't come through for a lot of reasons," said Robert Haddad, head of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's assessment and restoration effort. "But everywhere we look throughout the Gulf things are just a little bit out of kilter."

Zooplankton—microscopic organisms that are a source of food for many fish—were found to have ingested hazardous components of the specific oil from the spill, according to a study released last month by researchers at East Carolina University and other colleges and funded by the National Science Foundation. The study didn't speculate on whether the oil may have harmed the zooplankton nor did it say what the effect could be on larger organisms.

A large coral formation on the sea floor several miles from the well site appears to be dying because of a coating of oil from the spill, according to a study by Pennsylvania State University, Haverford College and other institutions, also funded by a National Science Foundation grant.

And a study of dozens of dolphins in Barataria Bay, La., where some of the heaviest oil slicks came ashore, concluded many of them are showing serious illnesses similar to animals that have been in contact with oil. The dolphins were underweight, anemic and suffering from low blood sugar as well as liver and lung ailments.

Dolphin deaths and strandings in the northern Gulf of Mexico have been much higher than historic averages since the spill, but a surge in unexplained deaths also predated the accident.

The dolphin study, released by NOAA, was careful not to say the illnesses are directly linked to the spill. The official assessment of the spill's environmental impact, which the agency is overseeing for the government and well owner BP BP.LN -0.67% PLC, is in its early stages of reviewing data from some 160 studies.

But the preliminary findings were serious enough, NOAA said, that groups that take part in rescues of stranded dolphins and other ocean mammals needed the information.

The Gulf, which has long been the site of oil and gas production, has suffered through many minor spills and accidents. On Thursday, government officials were monitoring a 10-square-mile oil slick, known as a sheen, about 130 miles southeast of New Orleans and searching for the source.

But the Deepwater Horizon incident dwarfed previous spills. For 87 days, oil flowed from the BP well that lay 5,000 feet below the ocean surface about 40 miles off the Louisiana coast. Slicks fanned out across 68,000 miles of open water and fouled more than 1,000 miles of coastline.

The impact could have been worse, experts say. A mitigating factor was the spill was located far offshore and nearly a mile underwater. The flow of the Mississippi River, meantime, kept much of the oil out at sea, and chemical dispersants broke up crude both below the surface and on it, as did naturally occurring oil-eating microbes.

BP agreed to pay the upfront cleanup costs and the costs of restoring oil-damaged habitats, which so far have topped about \$14 billion. The British company pledged up to \$1 billion for further restoration projects and \$500 million for research.

The ultimate environmental price tag for BP, however, will come through the NOAA-led process known as a Natural Resource Damage Assessment, which includes a range of scientific studies. If the studies, some of which could come out later this year, find links between the spill and the damage, BP would be expected to pay compensation or fund the cost of restoration.

Outside studies such as the one on zooplankton could be incorporated into the NRDA through the peer-review process, but BP or NOAA could contest their inclusion if they don't believe they are relevant or meet rigorous scientific standards. Disagreements could end up being adjudicated by federal judges who are overseeing the massive collection of civil complaints that BP faces in U.S. District Court in New Orleans.

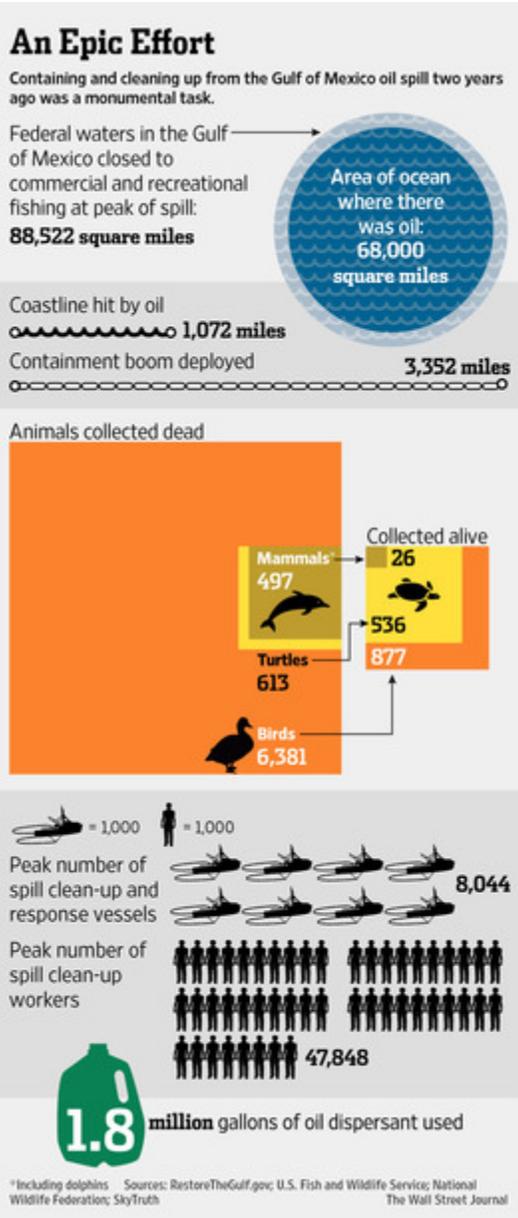
BP expects to finalize a civil settlement worth an estimated \$7.8 billion with thousands of Gulf businesses and individuals in the next few days. Civil and criminal settlements with the government, which could reach the tens of billions of dollars by some estimates, are pending.

The company is committed to working with NOAA and the Gulf Coast states to assess the damages from the spill, spokesman Tom Mueller said.

It is likely any final assessment or settlement of damages with the government will include a "re-opener" clause, which would give plaintiffs the right to ask the courts to revisit the terms if the damages turn out to be greater than originally believed, said David Uhlmann, a University of Michigan law professor and former head of the Justice Department's Environmental Crimes Section.

Doug Inkley, a senior scientist with the National Wildlife Federation, said even though the environmental damage scientists are finding is subtle, it is serious.

"The oil spill is to the Gulf what smoking is to a human," he said. "You're still able to function overall, but not nearly as well."



4. Cap-and-Price-Fix

Carbon-permit trading was supposed to be a 'free-market' solution. So much for that now that prices are low.

Editorial, WSJ, Apr 11, 2012

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303772904577333531487110266.html?mod=WSJ_Opinion_LEFTTopBucket

When the European Union launched its Emissions Trading System seven years ago, it was sold as a market-based solution to the supposed problem of climate change. The EU would set a cap on the total emissions of CO2 permitted in Europe, and businesses that emitted carbon would buy and sell these permits, thereby setting their price. This would allow firms that figured out ways to reduce their emissions to profit, by selling excess permits, and allow those for whom that wasn't practical to buy up permits to stay in business. Over time, the cap would be lowered, raising the cost of carbon and making alternatives such as wind and solar power more attractive.

But a funny thing happened on Europe's way to a low-carbon future. Instead of going up, up, up, as its designers plainly hoped, the price of carbon permits on the ETS has cratered. Last week the price collapsed to an all-time low of €5.99, before heading back north of €6. That's less than a quarter of what the permits were worth in July 2008.

The reasons for this are many. Some heavy emitters chose to move activities like smelting or steelmaking to avoid the emissions cap. The 2008 financial panic and subsequent recession has left Europe's economy smaller than expected, and less growth means lower emissions, contributing to the glut.

Whatever the reasons, you might think lower carbon-permit prices would be a good thing. After all, the price of permits acts like a tax on the economy, and lower prices leave money for things like investment and hiring. If you did think that, however, you wouldn't be thinking like a climate-change catastrophist.

U.K. climate-change minister Greg Barker, for instance, is treating the low price of carbon as a sign of market failure. He and many of his colleagues on the Continent are responding to the price crash by looking for ways to prop it back up—either by lowering the cap further or setting a floor on the price, regardless of demand.

In other words, the politicians were content to let the market work its magic when they assumed that an ever-rising price of carbon would lead to more solar, more wind and less hydrocarbons in the economy. But they're doing an about-face now that the price is falling.

The European Commission, Parliament and national leaders are now entertaining suggestions from the alternative-energy lobby on how to boost the price of carbon permits. German utility E.ON, which says it has sunk €7 billion into wind, solar and biofuels, wants an annually adjusted minimum price for carbon allowances. Royal Dutch Shell, which last year entered a \$12 billion joint-venture to produce biofuels in Brazil (no cap there), wants the EU to create more artificial scarcity by removing about half the allowances currently traded on the ETS. Theoretically, at some level well north of €15 per ton of CO₂, ETS emissions permits would drive enough investment to support large-scale alternative-fuel use.

It would seem then that the real idea behind the carbon-permit system was to drive up the price of emissions to the point that people and businesses would turn to alternative energy. But at current prices, carbon permits are too cheap to make even heavily subsidized renewables attractive. That has the political class in Europe looking for ways to fix the prices.

If governments merely want to raise the price of emitting carbon, it would be simpler, and certainly more honest, to tax it directly. Government price fixing eliminates what little "market" there is in the supposedly market-based solution of cap-and-trade.

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