



A Monthly e-Newsletter From:

 Institute for Alternative Futures

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## ***Forward Perspectives***

### **An Alternate Peak Oil Scenario**

By [IAF Senior Fellow Robert Olson](#) and [IAF Futurist Craig Bettles](#)

Advocates of "Peak Oil" are beginning to be taken more seriously as oil prices flirt just under the \$100.00 per barrel mark. Peak Oil advocates believe that the rate of global oil production is near its peak, and that production will soon start to decline as fast as it once grew.

At the same time, global demand for oil is increasing much faster than most experts anticipated, due largely to growth in China and India. China's car production has doubled since 2002. Some 14,000 additional cars hit China's roads every day. Put these two things together - plummeting production and soaring demand - and before long \$100.00 per barrel could look like the good old days. Because the world economy is so dependent on oil, hitting the Peak Oil point in the next few years would probably lead to a global depression, resource conflicts, political chaos, economic downsizing, and extensive re-localizing.

That's about the worst energy scenario anyone could imagine, right? Wrong. The "official future" described by mainstream organizations such as the United States Geological Survey (USGS), Cambridge Energy Research Associates (CERA) and the major oil companies is arguably more disastrous.

These mainstream analyses estimate the recoverable global resource base at about 4.8 trillion barrels, as opposed to something in the vicinity of the 1.2 trillion barrels projected by many Peak Oil advocates. With that much oil, production doesn't peak until after 2030 - at which point there's an "undulating plateau" of production rather than a steep decline, so that there will still be more oil being produced per year at the end of the century than there is today.

What's not to like about this seemingly rosy scenario? First, obtaining all that oil, if it's possible at all, would be environmentally damaging. It would require drilling off all the coastal areas that are now protected, pumping out the arctic, and ravaging large swaths of Canada and the Western United States in the process of extracting over a trillion barrels of oil from its oil shale and tar sands. Converting this unconventional oil would require more than 1.5 trillion barrels of fresh water - an increasingly precious commodity.

Second, using most of that oil would be environmentally catastrophic. It would irreversibly set us on a course for melting the vast ice sheets that cover Greenland and western Antarctica. Rather than taking millennia to melt, they would disappear in a few centuries, raising sea level by 40 feet and devastating coastal cities and island nations all around the world. Not to mention the droughts, famine, ecological disruptions, species extinctions, hurricanes, heat waves and other problems unchecked global warming would create.

Finally, this rosy scenario has long led corporate planners to assume that they have plenty of time to work out a transition from oil to other sources of energy. And it has allowed politicians to delay the tough decisions needed to spur large improvements in energy efficiency and develop alternative sources of energy. It's allowed us to drift along for decades without ever developing a coherent energy policy or even having a good public dialogue about what that policy should be. So the "official future" isn't an optimistic scenario at all. It's the ultimate disaster scenario.

Is it possible to steer between the Scylla of Peak Oil and the Charybdis of Climate Disaster to reach far more positive energy futures? If it is, we urgently need to turn away from the deceptive allure of the "undulating plateau" and invest aggressively in alternative approaches. The needed level of investment might not be possible after Peak Oil actually does occur, so we have to get moving, soon, on a bigger scale than any of our political leaders have yet dared to propose.

IAF will explore other energy scenarios in future issues of this newsletter, including emerging High Tech Energy possibilities and a Peak Oil Soon scenario with a silver lining.

## ***Trends and Insights***

### **Audiology Profession Prepares for Independent Practice**

The audiology profession, guided by the Audiology Foundation of America (AFA), is moving toward a future of independent and autonomous practice.

AFA has been a leader in the transition to have the doctor of audiology degree become the point of entry into the profession. However, the foundation was not content with achieving that laudable goal. The AFA board brought in IAF Senior Futurists Marsha Rhea and Bill Rowley to help them scout opportunities as well as develop a vision and audacious goals for the profession.

IAF developed a visioning workshop for the AFA board and other invited guests in March and July to set a vision and audacious goals for the next 10 years. AFA committed to a new vision of launching audiologists into independent and autonomous practice through quality educational preparation, knowledge resources and leadership development.

"Doctor of Audiology graduates are not always prepared for independent practice or for roles of equal value on healthcare teams," said AFA Executive Director Susan Paarlberg. "Many need additional resources to provide the full spectrum of expert patient care. Faculty interests in research specialties often aim students away from mainstream audiology patient problems, and we plan to launch a sea change of new attitudes and resources to help audiologists succeed as healthcare practitioners in our modern competitive world."

AFA realizes the key to achieving their vision for the profession lies in building up the education and knowledge base of new and practicing audiologists. To make their vision a reality, AFA plans to work with the universities to build larger and more rigorous programs with faculty who are current with clinical practice. The Foundation also intends to provide an essential and accessible knowledge resource with professional practices and business information that both students and practicing audiologists can rely on.

The other major step in creating a better future for audiology is in developing the next generation of leaders. AFA will create these leaders through a continuous leadership development program. AFA also wants a growing network of leaders distributed across the profession in key professional organizations, practice areas and institutions and agencies shaping audiology.

"This idea of an independent and autonomous profession drives the new vision for AFA," said Senior Futurist Marsha Rhea. "In our visioning workshop, the AFA leaders talked passionately about changing the DNA of the profession. They see educational preparation, knowledge resources and leadership development as the strategies to get the job done."

## ***News and Events***

### **Disparities Foresight Briefing: Addressing the Social Determinants of Health**

The Disparity Reducing Advances Project, in conjunction with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, will hold a Disparities Foresight Briefing on addressing social determinants of health on Thursday, December 6th, 2007.

The Disparities Reducing Advances Project is a multi-year, multi-stakeholder project developed by IAF to identify the most promising advances for bringing health gains to the poor and underserved. One of the key findings of the DRA Project has been the importance of the social determinants of health to disparities. Social determinants are the social and economic conditions under which people live and that have a large impact on their health.

Health care reform will do little to reduce health disparities unless we work on the social environment and the social determinants of health as well. This is happening in communities across the country in initiatives focusing on housing, access to healthy foods, safe and activity friendly neighborhoods, and transportation. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH U.S.) is a prime example. Such initiatives are part of an emerging social movement to reverse health disparities.

The Disparities Foresight Briefing, sponsored by the American Cancer Society, will consider these efforts and their policy implications through the presentations of five speakers well versed in health disparities and public policy, including:

- Dolores Acevedo-Garcia, PhD, Associate Professor of Society, Human Development, and Health, Harvard School of Public Health
- Amparo Castillo-Richmond, MD, MS, Project Director, Midwest Latino Health Research, Training & Policy Center, University of Illinois Chicago
- Larry Cohen, MSW, Executive Director, Prevention Institute
- Rosemarie M. Henson, MPH, MSSW, Deputy Director, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, CDC
- Stephen Thomas, PhD, Director of the Center for Minority Health at the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health and Philip Hallen Professor of Community Health & Social Justice.

The Disparities Foresight Briefing will be held from 12:15 - 2:00 pm in room B339 of the Rayburn House Office Building. Lunch will be available at 12:00 pm. Seating is limited and registration may close early, so make sure to R.S.V.P. [here](#) on the IAF website. You can also call (703) 684-5880 ext. 18 to make a reservation.

## ***Upcoming Events***

*Capturing the Imagination of the Digital Native*, NER I&E Renaissance Conference, IAF Futurist Craig Bettles, December 5th, Providence, RI.

*Reducing Health Disparities Faster: Addressing Social Determinants of Health*, Disparities Foresight Briefing, The DRA Project, December 6th, Washington D.C.

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