

## The Peak Oil Crisis and Water Supply

Much is being made about the "Peak Oil Crisis" in the media today. Gasoline and natural gas prices are high and continue to rise. But what is the "peak oil crisis" and how does it impact our water supply?

Peak Oil is discussed and defined in an excellent book by Kenneth S. Deffeyes entitled "Beyond Oil, The View from Hubbert's Peak". As Mr. Deffeyes notes:

"The supply of oil in the ground is not infinite. Someday, annual world crude oil production has to reach a peak and start to decline."

This is the crux of "peak oil." However, we have always thought that this peak oil decline is in the future sometime, to be dealt with by future generations like many of our other problems.

Mr. Deffeyes goes on:

"It is my opinion that the peak will occur in late 2005 or in the first few months of 2006."

About the United States, he continues:

"I nominate Thanksgiving Day, November 24, 2005 as World Oil Peak Day. We can pause and give thanks for the years 1901 to 2005 when abundant oil and natural gas fueled enormous changes in our society. At the same time, we have to face up to reality: World oil production is going to decline, slowly at first and then more rapidly."

If this is true, then we can not leave the problem to future generations. People around the world and the leaders of the world's countries need to take action. This is particularly true of the leading energy using countries like the United States, China and India, as well as the countries of the European Union.

The real issue is energy, which goes beyond oil supplies. Much of our energy is supplied directly or indirectly by the use of oil and natural gas. Energy in the form of hydrocarbons and electricity fuels our world today. Essentially declining oil supplies mean less energy available to fuel our world. This means less gasoline and electricity as well as less food, plastic, steel, concrete, lumber and asphalt paving to name a few.

How does this impact our water supplies?

How are water and energy linked? In my book "Understanding Water and Terrorism", I note that two of our nation's critical infrastructures are the water supply systems and the electrical grid. A third major infrastructure is the transportation system.

Simply put, without energy most of our nation's water supply would cease to work. Energy in the form of electricity, diesel and natural gas is used to pump and process our raw water into clean drinking water. Chemicals and supplies for our water treatment plants and our water distribution systems are transported by truck, air and rail.

"But I am in a rural community or live on a farm, far from the large city water supplies," you say. Your community still has to pump the water into the distribution lines and maintain line pressure. If you live on a farm or in a rural setting, you probably have a pump for your well, which uses energy.

Another issue is fire protection. One of the main uses of water is to fight fires, whether building fires or wildfires. A good example of the problem was the lack of water for fire protection after Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans. Part of New Orleans was burned because there were no pumps, electricity, water or water pressure to fight the fires.

Water and agriculture around the world is very closely linked. We can not grow food without water. Water is critical to our food supply. Much of the water used to irrigate our crops is pumped from the ground, or pumped from rivers and lakes onto fields. In California, water is pumped through long irrigation canals stretching hundreds of miles from the Colorado River to the fields. Modern irrigation systems are very dependent on energy sources such as electricity, diesel or natural gas.

But What Can I Do about this?

One way you can help yourself and our nation get through this crisis is to become informed. There are several very good books on the market today that will give you some background and a basic understanding of the issues. You can then make decisions affecting your family and your future based on a "heightened level of awareness."

This will also have an impact on the world that we leave to future generations. Without this awareness, we leave the decisions to our "leaders." We essentially take ourselves out of the "loop" and let others dictate our future. While our leaders may be well meaning, they need help. It may be easier to take popular positions based on a "60 second media newsbyte" or follow the position of our political party, but these rarely if ever result in a satisfactory long term solution to any problem. This is especially true of our current energy crisis, which is a survival issue for the United States.

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#### About the Author

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