

The Thumb: Short takes

Jun 02 2012

Scary reading » We've just reached a milestone, an unhappy one. The level of heat-trapping carbon dioxide in the [Arctic atmosphere](#) has exceeded 400 parts per million — the highest it's been for at least 800,000 years. Globally, the level is 395ppm, but scientists say it will pass 400 within a few years. Before the Industrial Revolution, it was around 275ppm. Trouble is, carbon dioxide, the main contributor to global warming, hangs around for 100 years, and the rise in CO2 is accelerating as emissions from fossil fuels are hitting record highs. Most troubling of all, perhaps, is that none of this is spurring significant action. Jerry Taylor of the libertarian Cato Institute says that, at least in the United States, there's zero chance of meaningful restrictions on greenhouse gas emissions no matter what the CO2 readings are. The reason he gives is political dynamics. That's a polite way of saying that conservative politicians, citing bogus, bought-and-paid-for science, deny any link between human activity and climate change. Sadly, too many Utah politicians are part of that shameful chorus.

Fast start » It appears that [Aung San Suu Kyi](#) is determined to make up for lost time. After 24 years of forced political isolation in Myanmar, the pro-democracy advocate made her first address on foreign soil in two decades Friday in Bangkok. She urged the international community to view the sweeping reform process started by Myanmar's president, Thein Sein, with a "healthy skepticism." Her country, still known as Burma in some quarters, is rich in natural resources but impoverished by decades of authoritarian rule and economic sanctions. The Nobel Peace Prize laureate and newly elected opposition leader expressed hope that foreign investors will exercise caution and do business openly so that corruption would not gain a stronger foothold and that the masses — especially the mostly jobless young — would receive maximum benefit.

What would Teddy do? » The [Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership](#), named for the Republican president who practically created the idea of preserving federal lands for future generations, was among the sponsors of a new study that shows the protection of natural and scenic areas is not mere nostalgia. It is an economic benefit to Utah and other places that are home to wild lands prized by hunters, fishermen and others who value — and pay to visit — such places. As part of a larger group called the Sportsmen for Responsible Energy Development, the partnership doesn't oppose drilling and mining. It just makes the valuable argument that energy development is not all that public lands are good for, and that those who issue permits need to consider what will be left for the future.