

Santa Ynez Valley Journal

FROM THE RIGHT

By Harris Sherline, Contributing Writer

To drill or not to drill

Most of America's politicians and the general public have finally realized that we're going to need all the sources of energy we can get to meet the continuing rise in demand for transportation fuels and power. All technologies — both existing and developing — likely will have a place in the mix of solutions, but there are differences of opinion about how we should proceed.

I'm in favor of doing it all: drilling in the continental U.S., in the Alaska National Wildlife Reserve and offshore, developing clean coal technology, nuclear, solar, wind, hydro, etc., etc., etc. — and conservation. We do need to drive less and use less electricity, natural gas and other types of energy. But, contrary to the claims of some, we can't conserve our way of our energy dilemma. And, waiting for the ideal solution would likely take far longer than drilling here and now. Some potential solutions will surely take longer than others, perhaps a very long time, but trying one or two at time while we wait to see if they work means stringing the effort out over many years.

Oil, coal and gas are still the cheapest and most effective sources of energy for running factories, trains, airplanes, heating buildings, operating cars and trucks, etc. But, some new technologies are also currently being developed that could be very important sources of energy in the future, one of which is ocean waves. This is not some pie-in-the-sky alternative. It's already here, with Portugal about to start work on the world's first commercial wave power plant, which could eventually supply 20 percent of that country's energy needs.

If our politicians would lift the restrictions they themselves have imposed on our ability to develop America's energy resources and get out of the way, there would be a surge of risk takers who are more than willing to invest the money and effort needed to solve the current crisis — and it would not take 10 or 20 years, as some people would have us believe.

One glaring example of illogical and foolish thinking is the fact that we cannot drill offshore, while other nations, such as China, India and others are entering into leases with Cuba to drill in Cuban waters, in an area that intrudes on U.S. territorial waters. (“Cuba Plans Offshore Wells Banned in U.S. Waters,” by Michael Janofsky, May 9, 2006)

Perhaps the most offensive behavior of all is that of our Congressional leaders, who adjourned for a five-week summer vacation without allowing proposed legislation about offshore drilling to reach the floor for a vote before they headed home, while the American public struggles with the impact of high gasoline prices on their lives.

The nation's Congressional leaders continue to block every effort to lift sanctions on drilling for oil and gas, notwithstanding the fact that, according to a recent Fox News poll, 75 percent of the American people now support “increasing oil in the United States immediately, 71 percent favor

drilling offshore and 54 percent approve drilling “in a small area of the Alaskan Wildlife Refuge.” (“Pelosi’s and Reid’s Big Choice,” by Newt Gingrich, July 29, 2008)

The answer is not rocket science. Instead of holding out for the “perfect solution,” whatever that may be, the U.S. should jump in with both feet and start drilling here and now, everywhere we can, while also moving ahead to develop alternative sources of energy. I recommend you log on to the Internet and listen to an impassioned speech by Alaska’s Republican U.S. Rep Don Young at <http://www.youtube.com:80/watch?v=MlfmvwxgHM>.