

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I respect Weisman's non-profit work for a biogas power plant in Mexico. Methane is far worse than CO2 and has the benefit of providing energy and treating sewage. However, our world's energy usage and consequent pollution is vast and we need many solutions to keep this unique planet sustaining its life.

Steve Trapp
Electrical engineer
Corvallis

POKING THE SACRED COW

I would like to thank *EW* for having the brass ones to run my PV solar panel opinion piece (12/3) criticizing Oregon's sacred cow. I would like to thank those many, many people who complimented the article. I can live with honest criticism, but I have to respond to Mark Luterra's response (12/10). He makes the claim that covering "1.5 percent of the continuous U.S. would supply 100 percent of the nation's energy." This is a bad case of what my brother calls "fairies in the fuse box." One and a half percent of the contiguous U.S. is 120 billion square meters. If I spotted the whole country 200 watts/m2 of sunshine and 15 percent efficient panels, this would produce 3.9 quadrillion BTUs, which is 3.8 percent of the nation's 101 quadrillion BTU annual energy use, not 100 percent. Provided, of course, you don't need any lights on at night.

Luterra states the DC current produced by PV panels can "easily be transformed to high voltage and/or converted to AC to power anything that runs on electricity." Inverting electricity does not increase its power; it only changes the current. That thing you plug into your car's cigarette lighter is an inverter. Any guesses what would happen if we plugged a 5,000 watt clothes dryer into it?

To avoid future confusion, my suggestion to solar panel owners is to take out the electric chainsaw and cut down the utility pole in front of their houses and run solely on solar power.

Warren Weisman
Eugene

BETTING ON SOLAR

I read Warren Weisman's rant (12/3) on solar cells with great amusement. Hard to argue that the current technology isn't good enough, but to hear the argument from someone who is representing a large power plant in Mexico is just ironic. What we know is that Americans will not give up their power for pretty much any reason. We know the current solar technology isn't good enough. We know the big company answer is to build coal power plants in the boonies, and then run billion-dollar grid lines through wilderness areas to get the power to the suburbs. This business model doesn't seem to be very good for the citizens of the planet. I don't see why burning biogas changes this equation.

The best future is having a house on the grid, with solar, wind and batteries to run it. The cost today to make your house energy neutral via solar cells is about the cost of a nice custom kitchen. Good news is that "W" is out of the White House and Obama is doing smart things to bring renewable energy to the masses. More good news is that the capitalist system sees green energy as the next best place to make lots of money.

My best bet is that inside of 10 years, each homeowner is going to have a chance to put solar cells on their roof and after paying a regular power bill for five or 10 years, never pay for electricity again.

Solar energy is going to happen, or burning unlimited coal needs to not kill the planet. I'm betting on solar, and you should too.

Peter Gregory
Corvallis

LEASH 'EM UP

I have to echo Matt Dillender's sentiments in his Dec. 3 letter, "Dogs on the loose." Unthinking, irresponsible, uncaring dog owners are not controlling their dogs, and a backlash may be coming. Note the unfortunate killing in the S.F. Bay Area, where a dog owner walking his dogs off leash, and not heeding a passerby's call to rein in his dogs, was shot dead. People, even other dog owners, are getting fed

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