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Jackie Shane

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Fuel Production

When looking for energy statistics, you can begin by visiting Fedstats

<http://www.fedstats.gov/>

and within "agencies by subject" pull down "energy." This should give you three sites: the Energy Information Administration, the Minerals Management Service, and the U.S. Geological Survey. The USGS collects information on non-fuel minerals and materials. Though they track a plethora of statistics, the numbers don't necessarily relate to traditional energy sources.

The Energy Information Administration, a division of the Department of Energy, exists to collect and disseminate information on energy. They cover a broad area of economic angles including production, consumption, distribution, prices, technology, and other related financial matters. The data cover coal, petroleum, natural gas, electricity, nuclear energy and alternative power. Here you can track the prices of gas and heating fuel, review productivity, and view a few legislative bills that related to oil production and the environment. Though this sight does link to green house emissions and other environmental issues, the information seems to favor the producers. There are various brochures to educate (or perhaps placate) the consumer, such as the one entitled "Where does your heating oil come from?" which explains the spike in heating oil prices during the winter season. The brochure entitled "Where does my gasoline come from." Explains that about half of our oil comes from non-western sources, with 19% from the Persian Gulf.

<http://www.eia.doe.gov/neic/brochure/gas04/gasoline.htm>

Royalty relief

I was not able to locate from EIA information on the cost of drilling or the tax subsidies that go into oil exploration and production. *The New York Times* however, recently reported that oil companies stand to gain as much as \$28 billion over the next five years because of last year's energy bill that allows companies to avoid paying royalties on oil and gas produced in the Gulf of Mexico. (*Vague Law and Hard Lobbying Add Up to Billions for Big Oil*. The New York Times, March 27, 2006.

This article does not take into account the cost of protecting oil fields in the Persian Gulf. As for the cost of the war in Iraq, The National Priorities Project

<http://nationalpriorities.org>

maintains a running tally of what tax payers have paid based on Congressional Appropriations. As I was writing this column the cost was just over \$270 billion. This enormous sum does not however take into account incidentals such as health care for wounded soldiers, mental therapy for those with post-traumatic stress disorder, dead Iraqis nor the opportunity costs of diverting investments away from more productive sources. Since Congress just approved raising the cap on the national debt, you might

also notice from this sight that 20% of what you just paid in income tax this year will go toward paying the interest on our national debt. This is a fascinating website that definitely offers food for thought.

The Minerals Management Service (MMS) collects data on “off-shore and Federal and American Indian oil, gas, and minerals.” The MMS evaluates the potential revenue of gas and mineral exploration and leasing. Though this site is not great for finding easy statistics, it is interesting to note the prices paid for leasing off-shore sites for drilling. Recently one sale garnered \$588 million dollars. The enthusiasm over the completion of an oil pipeline in the Rockies clearly explains the perspective of this site. There is a public comment system and a link to issues open for comment <https://ocsconnect.mms.gov/pcs-public/do/ProjectsOpenForComment> Royalty relief was one of the issues posted, but there was no way to view the drafted legislation.

Fuel economy

If you intend to purchase a new car and wonder which ones will cost you the least in gas, you must make a point of visiting <http://www.fueleconomy.gov/> hosted by the Environmental Protection Agency. On the left side of the home page you’ll see a box entitled “find and compare cars.” Try both search capabilities because they don’t duplicate themselves. Unfortunately the system only examines cars issued since 1994, so it has its limitations if you wish to check a used car. If you are considering a specific new car, try the “side by side comparison.” You’ll see the mileage, emissions, and the average cost of driving 15,000 miles in a year. This is a dynamic database so you can adjust the cost according to your local fuel cost. If you have not yet decided which vehicle to purchase, click on “search by class” to see a list of vehicles in order of efficiency. I was surprised to learn that the automatic Honda Civic was slightly more fuel-efficient than the manual transmission model.