

IN THIS ISSUE:

1. Handgun Safety Training for Women
2. "Flying Wild" Curriculum
3. Rimfire Sporter Guide
4. U.S. Bid to Ease Gas Prices
5. High Gas Prices Propel "Moped Madness"

1. HANDGUN SAFETY TRAINING FOR WOMEN

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System is sponsoring a Handgun Safety Training for Women. The training will be held on May 22-23, 2006 at the Monroe County Extension Office Auditorium from 9:00am - 4:00pm. The training program will be conducted by a certified NRA instructor. The cost is \$25.00 per person.

Topics include: Basic Knowledge of Firearms

- * Home Firearm Safety
- * Handling
- * Loading
- * Safe Storage
- * Cleaning

Basic Pistol Shooting Course

- * Different Pistols
- * Live Firing
- * Basic Handling of Various Pistols

Registration deadline is May 17, 2006. Call the Monroe County Extension Office at 251-575-3477 to register or visit us online at www.aces.edu/Monroe

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone#: _____

Registration Cost: _____

2. NEW "FLYING WILD" CURRICULUM

Come Fly with us and learn about the birds in your area with the Flying

WILD curriculum. This curriculum is the newest member of the Project Family - WILD, WET, etc.- and focuses on birds in our environment. We will have a fun day of training and birding on June 17, 2006, at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens starting at 9:00. If anyone is interested in becoming a facilitator, please call or email Shirley Farrell at 205-379-2106W, 205-815-3554H, sfarrell@jefcoed.com

This is a free workshop for anyone wanting to train others. A free curriculum guide will be given to each participant, as well as a CD of the 40 most common birds in Alabama, bird coloring books, migratory bird poster, and door prizes.

3. CMP RIMFIRE SPORTER GUIDE & MATCH PROGRAM

New Rimfire Sporter Guide and National Rimfire Sporter Match Program Available - The 2006 version of the CMP Guide to Rimfire Sporter Shooting is now available. The new guide includes the official 2006 CMP Rimfire Sporter Rules, de-tailed instructions on how to shoot Rimfire Sporter, instructions for match sponsors on how to conduct Rimfire Sporter Matches and the official match program for the 2006 Na-tional Rimfire Sporter Match at Camp Perry.

More Details <<http://www.odcmp.org/0406/default.asp?page=06RIMFIRE>>

4. A US BID TO EASE GAS PRICES

But the president and Congress can do little in the short term to help consumers. Price gouging! Windfall oil profits!

Those are words that make many Americans see red, especially when prices skyrocket at the pump. This spring, gasoline costs 70 cents a gallon more than it did last April - a rise that traders say has more to do with market speculation than a fundamental shift in supply and demand.

So what can the US do? That's the question roiling Washington right now. Congress is promising probes, hearings, and maybe new laws reining in windfall profits. Some lawmakers are talking about rebate checks for families. Others are calling for a lower federal gasoline tax.

Tuesday, President Bush waded into the issue, saying the administration would not tolerate "manipulation" of gasoline prices. He also ordered a temporary halt to filling the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) to relieve pressure on crude oil prices.

All the rhetoric will certainly resonate with many Americans, worried or angry about the steep rise in prices this spring. But experts and even members of

Congress concede that the federal government has limited ability to push prices down, at least in the short term.

What really matters, they add, is what the government does for the long term - themes that Mr. Bush also sounded in Tuesday's speech. But such moves do little to calm the public uproar as Republicans and Democrats try to get out in front of the issue. "Consumers and motorists think questions should be asked. There is no natural disaster" to push up prices, says Mantill Williams of AAA in Washington. "But there does not seem to be any hard evidence of illegal activities" either.

Next week, many of the major oil companies will report first-quarter earnings, and they're expected to be eye-opening. The industry, which is often called to Capitol Hill to testify, is bracing for yet more investigations and lectures.

"It won't be the first or the last [time]," says Robert Slaughter, president of the National Petrochemical and Refiners Association in Washington. "The good news is that studies in the past have largely found that market conditions are responsible for the prices in the industry that we display."

Many gasoline retailers say it's not their fault that prices are rising. Jeff Lenard, a spokesman for the National Association of Convenience Stores, says consumers are complaining that prices are going up even when there are no deliveries of fuel. "They then go inside and start screaming at the clerk," he says. "But what they don't know is the prices are based on the replacement cost - the price the wholesaler tells them they will be paying for their next shipment."

Dennis Jacobe, chief economist at Gallup, says prices have reached the "psychological level" that causes many Americans to become "exercised." He says in polls, Gallup has found that gasoline at \$3 a gallon causes many Americans to "recalculate everything."

He says it is reminiscent of the post-Katrina period when prices rose so quickly that Americans postponed major purchases. The economy grew at under 2 percent in that quarter.

The ramifications of a pullback by the consumer are not lost on Washington. Tuesday Bush, in his speech, called the current price "a hidden tax on Americans." He characterized his plan to deal with high energy prices as a "strategy that recognizes the realities of the world in which we live." Immediately after the speech, Democrats took to the Senate floor to blast any suggestion that the consumers were to blame.

"It is not the consumers' fault," said Sen. Richard Durbin (D) of Illinois, the deputy Democratic leader. "It is the fault of leadership: the leadership of the oil companies and the fault of an administration that comes from the oil patch and is afraid to confront their old friends when it comes to these rising prices at the gas tank."

In fact, rallying behind a common energy policy is a tough call for either party. In the past, energy debates on Capitol Hill have been shaped by regional, rather than partisan, lines. While some Democrats call for responding to the crisis by opening up new sources of production at home, Sen. Bill Nelson (D) of Florida vows to filibuster any attempt to open oil and gas exploration off the west coast of Florida.

"It's the most likely prospect we have for increasing supply in the next few years," says Sen. Jeff Bingaman of New Mexico, ranking Democrat on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee and a cosponsor of the bill. Democrats are also divided over whether to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to drilling.

"It's going to be very difficult for the Republican Party to try to convince folks that this energy problem is the result of anything that Democrats have or have not done, particularly when oil profits are announced next week," says Bill Wicker, the Democratic spokesman for the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

Since 1990, oil and gas interests have contributed \$140.9 million to GOP federal candidates and \$46.7 million to Democrats, according to the Center for Responsive Politics in Washington. In the 2006 electoral cycle, those industries have given 84 percent to Republicans and 16 percent to Democrats, according to the Washington-based public-interest group.

Some consumer groups blame the current price run-up on the refiners. They maintain that consolidations have reduced the amount of gasoline available to Americans. "They have failed to expand capacity to discipline price," says Mark Cooper of the Consumer Federation of America.

He says any study of price gouging by the government is already too late. "They will look for collusion, but collusion is not the problem. It is how concentrated the industry has become."

However, Mr. Slaughter maintains that the mergers have kept some refineries open that would have otherwise closed. "It's not clear some of the small refiners would have survived on their own," he says. "The consolidation has made the industry more competitive and added refining capacity had the mergers not occurred."

Elements of the Bush plan

President Bush Tuesday outlined how he intends to ease high fuel prices. His short-term strategy includes the following three prongs:

- * Relief for consumers. Mr. Bush said the Federal Trade Commission, the Justice Department, and the Energy Department are investigating whether gasoline prices have been unfairly manipulated. The administration has urged all 50 state attorneys general to investigate possible illegal price manipulation. Bush also called on Congress to take back some of the tax breaks for energy companies.
- * Incentives for fuel-efficient vehicles. Bush urged Congress to expand tax credits for people who buy hybrid and clean-diesel vehicles.
- * More domestic supplies. Bush halted government purchases of crude oil for the Strategic Petroleum Reserve until fall, ostensibly freeing that supply for consumers. He also allowed the temporary suspension of clean-air rules requiring certain additives in gasoline that reduce pollution. The rule suspension makes it easier for refiners to meet demand, possibly lowering prices at the pump.

Sources: Ron Scherer and Gail Russell Chaddock, The Christian Science Monitor & Associated Press

5. HIGH GAS PRICES PROPEL A NEW 'MOPED MADNESS'

Scooters and mopeds see a rise in sales - and cachet - thanks in part to a youth energy ethic.

How it happened, Devin Biek still isn't exactly sure. Infatuation with an Italian Vespa scooter led this resident of Elkhart, Ind., to an ad on eBay, a trip to Iowa, and a triumphant return with a 1978 Rizzato Califfo moped that wouldn't start. After its carburetor was de-gummed, the creature roared to life in a puff of blue exhaust.

Four years later, Mr. Biek is still hooked. "Once you ride one, you have to have one," he says. "It's consumed my entire life, and I have no real explanation for it."

The moped and its bigger, flashier cousin, the scooter, are swarming out of Jimmy Carter's America and into George W. Bush's republic - a movement propelled by soaring gasoline prices surpassing those of the late 1970s and by legions of Americans who take seriously the call for oil independence. If the serious intent is mixed with a little fun from "moped gangs" who call themselves the Heck's Angels or the Hardly Davidsons, so much the merrier.

Though Gen-Xers and baby boomers are among those flinging a leg over these two-wheelers, the vehicles may owe their newfound cachet to their embrace by a younger set. Sometimes called "the millennials," they are said to embody a sense of social purpose, adopt a "team" approach to life, and rebel from their elders by

hewing to the small-scale. It's an attitude with a simple message: Small-bore is cool.

"This [moped resurgence] is a reflection of a deeper generational shift going on," says Neil Howe, a cultural historian and coauthor of "Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation." "The idea of a big, bad, dangerous gas-guzzling machine is not the millennial style. They prefer something that is not only socially responsible in a big sense, but also in a little sense: It makes less noise, and it's less likely to get them into an accident."

Though mopeds have conquered most of the globe, their acceptance in the United States has sputtered, at best.

But places like Atlanta - a temperate, young-blooded city where travel through interconnected neighborhoods is safe, and where Euro cool is evident in clothing shops and restaurants - the small-bore engine is increasingly seen as a fun, practical choice.

Scooter dealer Bill Gornto knew he was onto something after hurricane Katrina, when some gas pumps around Atlanta read \$9 a gallon and people came in "looking like zombies." He said he became a "scooter therapist," selling a record 20 scooters that week. "I almost felt guilty about it," he says, "but then people were telling me, 'No, man, you're doing a good thing.' "

Atlanta commuter Jeff Smith never really saw himself as a motorcycle guy. But four months ago he bought a used Vespa and soon purchased a second, larger one that's fast enough to take on the interstate. "I worried people were going to say, 'Why are you riding your girlfriend's bike?' " says Mr. Smith. "But instead people stop me every day and ask: 'What is it? How many miles to the gallon does it get? And how much does it cost?' "

To be sure, US sales of small-bore cycles aren't yet at their peak - 300,000 units in 1978. But sales are up 500 percent since 1999, and rose from 83,000 units sold in 2004 to 130,000 in 2005, according to the Motorcycle Industry Council. A new moped starts at \$1,000, and fancy scooters go for more than \$5,000. What distinguishes the scooter from the motorcycle is mainly its small-bore engine and small-diameter tires.

In fact, the tattered denim jackets and faux toughness of moped enthusiasts are boldly tongue-in-cheek, open invitations to small-bore envy. While the age of the average scooter owner has nearly doubled in the past five years to over 40, cultural experts credit mopeds' acceptance to the cachet of the kids, who often travel in packs.

The Creatures of the Loin gang out of San Francisco's rough-and-tumble Tenderloin

District grew from 25 to nearly 100 since 2004. In Chicago's Ukrainian Village, the Peddy Cash gang, bundled in wool caps, often ride into the wee hours. The Moped Army was founded in Kalamazoo, Mich., and boasts about 300 members. The subject of a documentary film and a comic book, the Army draws about 10,000 regular visitors to its website. Its motto: "Swarm and destroy."

The "millennial" generation, born just as the moped faded from American roads in the early 1980s, is the vehicle's perfect arbiter, some experts say. Coddled and safety-conscious, it also has an unapologetic sense of civic awareness. "This is a generation that has no need to prove themselves by riding around on a big motorcycle on the weekends; they're already cool," says Ann Fishman, CEO of Generational Targeted Marketing Corp. in New Orleans.

So far, the moped remains a stranger in a land where a full-size truck is a top-selling passenger vehicle. Fatalities of moped riders have doubled since 1999, to 100 in 2005. But nonfatal accidents dropped over the same period, from 6,000 to 5,000, says the National Safety Council in Itasca, Ill.

To many riders, everything about the moped makes sense. "There's the price, the gas mileage, the whole retro thing, belonging to a unique group," says Biek. "Besides that, they're phenomenal machines."

SOURCES: Patrik Jonsson, The Christian Science Monitor, MOTORCYCLE INDUSTRY COUNCIL; US DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

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"Teaching a child not to step on a caterpillar is as valuable to the child, as it is to the caterpillar."

--Bradley Miller