

# With Gas Costly, Drivers Finally Cut Back; Driving Decline Lowest Since 1980

By Ron Scherer

Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

For the first time since 1980, when long lines sprouted at gasoline stations, Americans are beginning to cut down on their driving.

The slight decline in total miles driven – apparent first in December – may indicate that the twin forces of high gasoline prices and a struggling economy are starting to affect the U.S. lifestyle.

Surveys find that Americans now consider gasoline prices a "financial hardship."

If Americans are still balking at prices at the pump by Memorial Day, the effect on the economy may be wider – ranging from how people take vacations to how many trips to the mall they make.

"If you don't have a job, these

prices are doubly hard," says Michael Swanson, an economist with Wells Fargo Economics in Minneapolis.

Americans' reluctance to pay an average of \$3.28 a gallon for fuel has already had an effect: Gasoline inventories are high. If it weren't for the high stocks, gasoline prices would be even higher, energy analysts say.

Still, by Memorial Day, gasoline could cost another 25¢ a gallon, energy analysts estimate. By the time refiners switch over to the summer blend of gasoline, the price could rise again.

"My feeling is the price will approach \$3.50 a gallon as gasoline inventories come down and people start driving more," says Sander Cohan, an energy analyst at Energy Security Analysis in Wakefield,

Massachusetts. "This summer, it's feasible for gasoline to hit \$4 a gallon."

If gasoline does hit \$4 a gallon, it might be a "psychological break point," says Dennis Jacobs, chief economist at the Gallup Organization in Washington.

"It doesn't just start to affect you financially, but you also start to think how much it costs to go someplace," he says. "People cut back on their recreational use of vehicles and all kinds of travel."

AAA, the national drivers club, has found that when gasoline prices are high, Americans try to compensate.

"They travel closer to home. They stay at more economical hotels. They eat out at fast-food restaurants and try to find the shortest route to a destination," says Troy Green, a spokesman in Washington.

In February, a survey by the National Association of Convenience Stores found that 29% of the respondents said that high gasoline

prices had forced them to change their spending patterns. Forty percent said they tended to drive somewhat less as a result of high gasoline prices.

One key to whether Americans will react negatively to gasoline prices is how quickly pump prices rise, Mr. Jacobs says. It is easier for consumers to adjust to a gradual rise. "If we see prices rising fast each day, it scares people," he says.

Energy analysts are concerned that the dynamics are in place for a relatively quick rise this spring. With gasoline inventories high and demand slow, refiners are pulling back on the production of gasoline, says Mr. Cohan.

"The refiners are losing money with oil at these levels, so they are cutting back," he says.

By one estimate, gasoline prices could rise 18¢ a gallon just to catch up to the rise in oil prices. Year to date, oil has risen 94¢ a gallon, compared with a rise of 76¢ a gallon for gasoline over the same time period, estimates John Felmy, chief economist for the American Petroleum Institute (API).

Another potential factor in determining gasoline prices: political pressures on oil companies. Last week, the chief executives of the top five oil companies were to testify

about energy prices before the House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming.

The committee chairman, Representative Edward Markey of Massachusetts, noted that gasoline prices, according to AAA, had hit a record high of \$3.28 a gallon.

"This new gas price record is a perfect example of why we need these oil companies to go on the record with the American people to discuss our dangerous dependence on oil," he said in a statement.

Rising global demand for oil, combined with the falling value of the dollar and a lack of access to potential new oil supplies, is behind the higher prices, API retorted.

The last time that Americans did cut down on their driving in response to high prices, around 1980, they reduced their driving for 14 months.

"We're starting to see a similar pattern emerge," Mr. Swanson says. "This could be a huge washout this summer and for a couple of years."

But Mr. Green is not so sure. "Americans love driving their cars, and for other people it's a necessity," he says. "They will make it up by cutting back in other areas if they have to."

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## DeTour Area

By Barbara Buschbacher

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There is nothing better that will give you a good feeling to start the week off than sunny blue skies on a Monday morning. The forecast for warmer temperatures the rest of the week looks positive.

DeTour Area Schools has announced the honors banquet will be Wednesday, April 23. For those students who have achieved academic excellence in the classroom, perfect attendance, or National Honor Society membership, the administration and staff will offer recognition at this banquet. Dinner will be served at 5:30 p.m. in the multi-purpose room, with the awards presentation beginning after dinner.

As parents, grandparents, and friends, we are proud of all the accomplishments of our young adults, those who are graduating from high school and college, and the young people serving in the Armed Forces and those who have served.

Dillon Woods, son of Wayne and Teri Ann Woods, served in the United States Air Force for four years. Dillon received an honorable discharge in August 2007. While in the service, he served as Crew Chief on the BIB (bomber) that flew to Iraq.

He is now in Oscoda, working for Kalitta Air, employed as an airplane mechanic working on 747s. Dillon's parents and friends are very happy to have him close to home.

The ladies of Wilderness Tabernacle Church will hold their annual spring luncheon Saturday, April 19, at 12:30 p.m. at the church on North Caribou Lake Road.

The Community Choir began

rehearsals for the June performance Tuesday, April 15, at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in DeTour. It's never too late to join this group, directed by Jean Bloom.

The DeTour Village Council held its monthly meeting Monday, March 24. Following are excerpts from that meeting: A procedure for lot purchases in the DeTour Area Business Park was presented to the Council for approval. The procedure plan shows the chain of events to take place when a prospective purchaser wishes to move into the business park. A motion was approved to adopt the procedure as part of the Business Park policy. For more information regarding the Business Park, contact the village office.

President Terry Nelson has asked the Council's opinion on taking a trip to Washington, to try to plead a case for the Village of DeTour on certain issues, one main issue being homeland security. Council approved, and President Nelson will be going some time in April.

A motion was made and supported to approve the request to transfer ownership of a 2007 Class C licensed business, with dance entertainment permit, located at 115 South Huron Street, from TBS, Inc. to Crystal River LLC.

The above excerpts are as recorded by Linda Fisher, village clerk. For a complete copy of the minutes, contact Ms. Fisher at the village office.

A thought: What a desolate place the world would be without flowers. It would be a face without a smile, a feast without a welcome.

## Pickford Quilt Show Seeks Photos

The Pickford Historical Society invites people to submit information and photographs of quilting and quilts in the Pickford area for its quilt show in June.

The successful event has grown out of the Pickford Historical Museum, so the society will host the show Friday, June 13, and Saturday, June 14, at Pickford Public Schools gymnasium. The show will be open Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The society is seeking photographs of quilts or people quilting, or quilt history stories, and invites people to share any memories of quilting in the Pickford area. The persistence through time of this art form, and interest in preserving it, prompted the society to start the show in 2006.

The show features antique quilts as well as modern pieces, made by people from the Pickford area. Signature quilts, and pieced, embroidered, crazy, appliqué, hand quilted, and machine quilted items will be displayed.

The historical society plans to display several quilts from its collection, including an 1898 signature quilt from the Sand Hill M. E. Church, formerly at 11 Mile Road and M-129, and a crazy quilt that belonged to one of Pickford's founding families, plus a few made by the Stirlingville Ladies Aide.

Raffle tickets will be available for a handmade queen size sampler quilt.

Anyone interested in displaying a quilt should call Mary Jane Pennington at (906) 647-9633 or Marge Schmitgal at (906) 647-8851 for more information.

A lunch will be served during the show in the school's multiple purpose room. Proceeds from the show, raffle, and lunch will benefit Pickford Historical Museum projects.

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