The Friday Burrito

The Kimchi Chronicles and Snack Attacks

Vol. XXVII #8
March 15, 2024

"You must pay the price if you wish to secure the blessing. "

Andrew Jackson

"I like to say, 'Chop suey's the biggest culinary joke that one culture has ever played on another,' because chop suey, if you translate into Chinese, means 'tsap sui,' which, if you translate back, means 'odds and ends.' "

Jennifer Lee

If it is March, then springtime is near and daylight savings time is back. A late afternoon golf round is again possible with ample time to finish 18 holes of lasting regret and frustration. Why do I continue to play? Well, it's outdoor exercise and occasionally I swing the club and putt the ball as if I know what I am doing. Not too often, but I have never met a golfer who feels differently. It's a strange game that way.

Other recent bouts of frustration can be found in both domestic political news and international events. So dispiriting. The NYT has a piece about a focus group of people who previously voted for Trump but won't do it again. That discussion certainly resonates with me. On the other hand, Robert Kennedy Jr. as an independent presidential candidate is keen to have either Aaron Rogers or Jesse Ventura as a running mate. Now, that's what I'm talking about! Shake up the shakers. Imagine wrestling matches in the Oval Office, or shotgun pass-option plays on the Senate floor. I'm down with either.

The 5 Gig Gap

I saw it for the first time two years ago during this time of year, again last year, and now I am watching it again. I'm talking about the mid-day CAISO day-ahead net demand forecast relative to the 5-minute net load. Between the hours of 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. there has been a familiar gap between the two metrics of about 4,000 MW to 5,000 MW, more towards the latter when reserve requirements were included. I found this especially true on days when the net load forecast (sans reserves requirements) dipped into the negative zone for one or more hours. My curiosity got the best of me, and I had to dig into the possible reasons.

Comparing hourly forecasts to a five-minute data series is a clunky exercise. When the morning supply ramps up then the net load declines, and the within-hour differences dampen. The opposite happens in the

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Western States Ticker

CAISO YTD Renewables Curtailment:

As of 2/28/24:	306,000 MWh
As of 2/28/23	257,000 MWh

% of solar and wind output curtailed:

YTD as of Feb. 2024	3.99%
YTD as of Feb. 2023	3.39%

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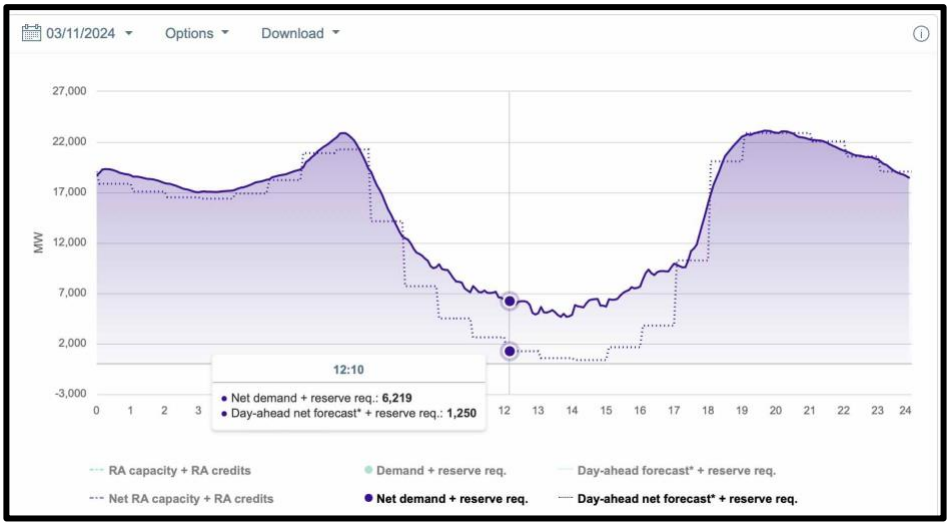
evening. But within the middle of this time zone the net load is relatively flat. Below is a figure of the comparison for last Monday, March 11. The pattern is the same on many days this week and last. So, what gives?



I examined swings in net imports and battery storage charging but these items didn't move in sufficient volume to explain the spreads. So, there had to be something else occurring after the day-ahead market closed. Thus, I turned my attention to the post-day-ahead Residual Unit Commitment (RUC) and the Energy Imbalance Market (EIM).

My search using the CAISO's OASIS indicated that both the RUC hourly load adjustments (about 2,500 MW for these hours)and EIM sales were equal parts of the difference. I'd graphically show you the results for last Monday to make the argument easy to understand, but OASIS ignored my many data download requests for a CVS file … always something to bitch about when using OASIS.

A nagging issue remains, however. I think the CAISO operators abhor negative net load (not including the reserve requirement). It must be a question of grid reliability that only more sunshine can enlighten.

Utility Industry Foci

The analysts at Bank of America Securities (BofAS) wrote two interesting summaries of discussions with regulators at the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) meeting in Washington, D.C., and utility industry leaders who attended the BofAS Utilities, Power & Clean Energy conference in New York City. Some observations I may have expected but others were a shocker. For example, I was pleasantly surprised to read that regulators are increasingly focused on near-term reliability. "*Prior years' NARUCs focused heavily on the future of natural gas, decarbonization, and environmental policy/objectives in general. These themes have been fading over the past 12-24 months but are increasingly on the backburner with regulators and stakeholders*

What we believe…

Competition yields lower electricity costs. Stable and transparent rules and regulations promote private investment.

Private investors, rather than utilities, will spend money on new power plants and transmission facilities if they can earn a return that is balanced with the risks.

Private sector investment results in lower average prices without risking consumers' money.

However, when IOUs do the investing, the risks to them are minimal or non-existent because ratepayers effectively cover the utilities' costs.

Overcapacity lowers electricity spot market prices; yet retail rates can still increase in this case due to full cost-of-service regulation.

Markets work best when there are many buyers and sellers.

At-risk money will be put to investment where markets exist that are well regulated and yield credible prices.

And what we should do …

Believe in ourselves.

Actively support the creation of independent, multi-state regional transmission organizations that coordinate policies with respective state utility commissions.

Support rules for resource adequacy that apply uniformly to all load-serving entities.

focused on the near term reliability and affordability pressures for customers." Yes, it's never too late to cry Uncle.

Load growth due to data centers seems broadly based. Unlike the CEC electricity demand forecast that I railed about last week whereby the near-term forecast was lower than actual CAISO peak loads in recent years, load growth and the need for more generation are front-and-center elsewhere. Per BofAS: "*The US electric utility sector is facing material load growth for the first time in decades as the projected proliferation of datacenters expands. Regulators from across the country are grappling with how to meet the potential load growth and identify the right regulatory construct.*"

At the BofAS NYC conference regarding data-center demand they noted that, "*Just as much as the new burgeoning demand is now a full-on push from regulators across near[ly] every geography to ensure industrial tariffs are established [and] to ensure they are paying their 'fair share' for [the] new generation investments"* required. Future rate cases will decide how to treat these items.

Continued on the next page

Enforce competitive solicitations by utilities for purchasing either thermal or renewable power.

Support choice among retail electricity customers.

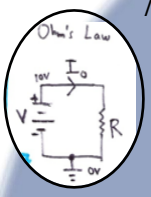
Lobby for core/non-core split of retail customers.

Advocate against policies that limit, through bid mitigation, merchant returns on investment that are comparable to utility returns.

Catch Some Z's

Getting Green: What Logjam Takes Priority? Distribution or Transmission?

Click here to learn more about Ziad Alaywan



I must admit I was a little baffled when new legislation was passed into law six months ago to clear the customer interconnection backups at the distribution level. In late April 2023, a group of 35 organizations sent a letter to the governor's office and the legislature calling for action about what they referred to as an "interconnection crisis." The letter urged California policymakers to take urgent action to address unacceptable delays in connecting new housing developments, critical services, and EV charging stations. No doubt the delays have been unprecedented and slowing down California's clean energy goals.

Typically, the transmission interconnection process is one of the major pillars that enables projects to be built and helps load-serving entities (LSEs) meet their RPS and resource adequacy requirements—but we're talking about interconnection to the transmission system managed by the CAISO not the distribution system.

The crisis is real, and it needs to be prioritized at the transmission level, not the distribution level.

The LSEs are projected to fall well short of the 60% RPS goal mandated for 2030. The shortfall is 47 TWh, or about 15,000 to 20,000 MW of renewable capacity depending on the capacity factor. The response from the state legislators has been SB 410. Known as the Powering Up Californians Act, it directs the CPUC to set time periods for distribution grid connections and upgrades. The law directs the CPUC to set "reasonable average and maximum target energization time periods" by Sept. 30, 2024. Regulators will also set utility reporting requirements "so that electrical utility performance can be tracked and improved." The bill also requires the CPUC to ensure that utilities "have sufficient and timely recovery of costs," and allows for the CPUC to utilize a balancing mechanism for energization costs that exceed authorized rates.

I am not sure what SB 410 would accomplish. A better approach would involve simplifying the process for connecting new generation capacity to the grid or identifying necessary transmission upgrades to accommodate at least 15,000 MW of new capacity by the end of the decade. Currently, CAISO is delaying the connection of thousands of megawatts of renewable energy to the grid, while thousands of kilowatts remain backed up at the local distribution level.

Stay tuned for more on this topic in the next article!

More on the Lopsided Nature of RA Non-compliance Penalties

In the February 23 edition of the Burrito, I wrote a piece about the skewed nature of the CPUC's Resource Adequacy (RA) compliance penalties. The problem, dear Brutus, is not in the stars but in the market price for "system" RA capacity, which is much higher than the penalty cost. So, the compliance exercise becomes either buy-at-a-premium and penalize your customers or pay-a-penalty and keep your customers (more) whole. The burden has fallen heavily upon the non-generation LSEs such as Community Choice Aggregators (CCAs) and Energy Service Providers (ESPs). What is more, when the CPUC switches the RA compliance paradigm in 2026 from monthly to hourly (i.e., one day type for each month), then the frequency of compliance failures may impose a greater financial burden.

Eric Little at the CalCCA provided some additional information about the situation that is worthy of your consideration. He wrote: "*The CPUC slice of day test report shows on the table to the right the number of deficiencies by LSE type. Consistent with your exegesis in the "Speak Softly and Carry a Big Tariff" Burrito, the majority of deficiencies are with non-IOU entities. But what gets really interesting are the aggregate positions (in MW) for all LSEs along with the aggregate of deficiency in MWs from only those LSEs that were deficient .*

Table 16. Deficient Load Serving Entities Under Slice of Day by Month and Type.

	May	June	July	August	September
IOU	0	1	1	0	0
CCA	7	12	10	10	15
ESP	8	6	7	8	8

Table 13. Aggregate 2024 Slice of Day Year Ahead Showings for September.

September	Aggregate System Showings	2024 90% YA Requirement + 15.43% PRM	Aggregate Position	Aggregate Deficiencies
HE 1	33,078	25,866	7,211	(758)
HE 2	32,953	24,524	8,429	(606)
HE 3	32,827	23,931	8,896	(534)
HE 4	32,676	24,053	8,623	(542)
HE 5	32,572	25,172	7,400	(685)
HE 6	32,534	27,351	5,183	(911)
HE 7	33,560	28,179	5,381	(543)
HE 8	35,939	28,185	7,754	(395)
HE 9	41,217	28,689	12,528	(327)
HE 10	43,922	29,577	14,345	(385)
HE 11	45,069	30,804	14,265	(471)
HE 12	45,476	32,218	13,258	(562)
HE 13	45,647	34,641	11,006	(776)
HE 14	46,048	37,427	8,621	(998)
HE 15	46,530	40,157	6,373	(1,295)
HE 16	46,615	42,118	4,498	(1,340)
HE 17	46,798	43,566	3,232	(1,450)
HE 18	47,074	44,343	2,731	(1,189)
HE 19	44,214	44,301	(87)	(1,458)
HE 20	43,035	42,885	149	(1,454)
HE 21	41,120	39,612	1,508	(1,316)
HE 22	35,654	35,239	415	(1,323)
HE 23	33,671	31,562	2,109	(1,019)
HE 24	33,546	28,699	4,847	(765)

"Per the table on the left, in every hour but for one, for all five months of May through September, the aggregate position is positive. This means that the total of all showings meets or exceed the reliability need of the grid. Yet at the same time, the CPUC shows 28 LSEs short with the aggregate of their short positions reaching 1,458 MWs."

Eric's point is that the aggregate showings diminish the problem to a tractable solution. For example, battery storage dispatch can be optimized for all LSEs such that a single hour deficiency would go away.

He continued, "*All of this to say that there is a very big friction created by having an hourly RA obligation but restricting the compliance instruments to daily. If we let all of those LSEs transact load obligations hourly, then there is a reasonable likelihood that they could find transactions to ensure their own RA obligation is met since it appears that the system need has already been met.*"

I get it. The CPUC is using a blunt instrument to test for "system" RA compliance that disproportionally harms LSEs without any or much generation. A more fluid within-day transaction of "system" RA capacity (buy/sell), like renting equipment by the hour, might help the entire fleet to be nimbler and the grid to be more reliable.

Oh, When the EVs Come Marching In

Two items in this week's print media caught my attention about EVs. First, and a bit of a surprise, EVs not only have sizeable lithium-ion battery packs, but also a 12-volt battery as found in all internal combustion engines . Ok. Not earthshaking news, yet the software logic dictating the state of charge for the 12-volt box has misfired

on a number of EV models. The result is that on occasion the EVs can't start, the internal computer is down, and the display consoles are dead. Hello.

Per a WSJ article that ran on Monday, "*In some new electric-car models, these 12-volt batteries are dying repeatedly and unexpectedly, leaving drivers stranded and needing a jump to get going again.*" The most frequent problems occur in models manufactured by Hyundai, Rivian, and Cadillac. What did the small battery say to the large battery? Don't charge me! NOT.

The irony is that the volume of electrical components inside the cabin can quickly drain the 12-volt doodad.

Separately, many states, especially those in the red column, have advocated special taxes on EVs to fund road maintenance and construction. Gasoline cars pay a tax at the fuel pump on a per-gallon basis. Per the WSJ, "*The federal gas tax, which supports the Highway Trust Fund, has remained unchanged at 18.4 cents a gallon since 1993. States, whose gas-tax rates vary widely, rely on that revenue for roughly half, on average, of their transportation funding … Those revenues increasingly are falling short of road and highway expenditures, for a variety of reasons, including greater fuel efficiency, rising construction costs, and the advent of EVs, which don't pay gas taxes at the pump.*"

In April 2022, I did a quick calculation of the California road-use taxes that were avoided by EVs[1]. The estimate was around $300/yr. as seen in the below footnote. Adding a road tax to EVs is the right thing to do. The following week a reader who owned a Tesla said his auto was registered in Wisconsin and that as an EV owner he paid a surcharge of $100 a year in lieu of paying a gasoline tax. Now here's one proposal recently introduced in the House for EVs to support the Highway Trust Fund: "*In Congress, Sen. Deb Fischer (R., Neb.) introduced a bill in September that would require EV buyers to pay up to $1,500 in a one-time fee at the time of sale and direct the revenue generated to the Highway Trust Fund*." Hmm.

Things In the People's Republic of California

Interview with Former UAMPS CEO and GM Doug Hunter

As Burrito readers know, I like to celebrate the careers of accomplished individuals who have made enormous value-added achievements in our industry. These are people known to us but are rarely acknowledged beyond the fringes of our workplace. Once they retire, they become ancient history. I would rather they not be forgotten and one way to do that is through an interview so that readers can come to appreciate the special place these individuals deserve. In other words, put it in writing.

The rules for this engagement are always the same. Exact quotes are eschewed and the words I write are mine alone based on my conversation with the guest. Any errors or omissions fall on me.

Long ago, I decided that Doug Hunter, the now-retired CEO and General Manager of Utah Associated Municipal Power Systems (UAMPS) was an exceptional individual. Our paths crossed when UAMPS first joined

[1] "*[In 2021] I spent $3,000 for gas.. Assuming an average price for premium gasoline of $4/gallon (woefully low today but not for 12-months ending March 31, 2022), that would be 750 gallons. Easily 80 per cent of the gasoline I purchased was in California, or 600 gallons. The best info I could find on California Excise Tax for gasoline was a fixed $0.515/gallon [in 2021] … Thus, I contributed $309 over the last 12 months to help California upkeep its roads and bridges.*"

WPTF. Doug would speak, and I would listen. I kept thinking that he was a secret dynamo of inventive and creative ideas in an industry not exactly known for breaking many molds. His pace of thinking never ebbed and when I spoke with him for this interview the guy hadn't lost a beat. I wanted to know what motivated the man. It definitely wasn't money or personal recognition. Through our discourse, I learned that he had a desire to achieve goals that were deeply cemented in his core beliefs.

As Doug and I traveled through his oral history there wasn't a chapter of his life that didn't pop a surprise for me. For example, his teen years were spent sharing time in two cities … Palo Alto, CA, and Salt Lake City. He also spent ample time with an uncle who lived in Montana. Although his parents never divorced, they opted to live separately and Doug, the oldest among three siblings, split his time between the two parental locations. He finished high school in Salt Lake City. He was a good student … or should I say he received good grades because knowledge came easy to him. He scored well on his college entrance exams and was accepted to all three universities to which he applied.

He decided to attend UC Davis where he majored in biochemistry with a minor in food technology. In his senior year he applied to the Veterinary School at Davis and was accepted. However, after thinking it over he decided that wasn't for him. That was my another surprise about Doug … UC Davis' Vet School is tops in the nation and acceptance is extremely competitive. He passed on that coveted opportunity and remains the only person I ever heard of to do so. He knew what he wanted, and it wasn't that. What he desired to do was travel around the western states and try different job opportunities. That's exactly what he did for two years.

Since Doug and I are contemporaries age-wise, I assumed he had a high draft number and didn't worry about going to Vietnam. Au contraire. His birthdate was #13 on the draft list. He wasn't sure what to do or which way to proceed. He enlisted in the Navy but while awaiting orders from the Navy he received a draft notice to appear for induction in Oakland, CA. Since he was a Utah resident the draft center in California didn't have any of his medical records or relevant history. So, they gave him a medical exam on site. When asked if he had ever broken any bones, he acknowledged that he had broken a minor bone in one foot due to an accident. He received a temporary deferment.

The deferment gave him six months to act. Thus, he sought and received a lasting medical deferment from a physician accustomed to these things, and the draft ended in 1973. It no longer was an issue and onward he went. His many jobs included being a ranch hand, and a gig as a land surveyor. Kind of like General George Washington, but George never did any cow poking in his day. By this time Doug was married, and he decided that he wanted to study for an MBA.

Okay, Doug, I asked, why an MBA after getting a BS in biochemistry? He said it was to combine the business acumen with his science background. He attended a nascent MBA program at Utah State, which had an entry class of 20 candidates. He loved the experience. Upon graduation he received offers to work in quality control for companies such as Gallo Wineries, Christian Brothers, and Miller Brewing, but none of those things interested him. Instead, he became a bartender at a well-heeled country club in Salt Lake City (who else but Doug would work at a bar in Salt Lake City?) where he met many influential people and made fantastic money in tips.

After a year of bartending, he took a job as a line manager at an HVAC company overseeing project installations. He was an expediter to make sure things got done on time and within budget. I think he learned a lot in that role that sharpened his skills as a general manager later on. Tired of being on call for the HVAC company, he joined the Intermountain Consumer Power Association (ICP) as a load-forecasting analyst. He recalled his first day in the office . There were no coffee machines to be found because the employees were mostly Mormon. So, Doug being Doug went to the local K-Mart during his 30-minute lunch break, bought a Mr. Coffee maker and brewed a cup in the office space that he shared with his boss. It was a bad coffee day as all the employees were upset with him and made him drink his joe outside of the building. He should have had

a Coke instead because that wouldn't have caused a kerfuffle, but he wanted coffee. Anyway, he complied with the outdoor ordinance.

The ICP was intended to be a joint action agency of Utah communities that wanted to buy power from the Intermountain Power Project (IPP), the 1,900 MW coal-fired facility in Delta, Utah. Doug's forecasts showed that the demand for electricity among the ICP members couldn't support the contemplated power agreement. The elders of the ICP basically ignored his work. That is, until a third-party venture wanted to finance some portion of the power purchase and there needed to be due diligence … including a quantifiable load forecast. Suddenly Doug's star rose within the organization.

The coal project and ICP never happened. However, the local investor-owned utility, Utah Power & Light (UP&L), put the ICP members on notice that they would soon no longer be able to buy wholesale power for resale. This was an obvious abuse of market power, and illegal. Doug became the front man to fight the case before the FERC. Also, during this time, ICP desired to enter into a power sales agreement with Deseret G&T for 60 MW of energy and capacity. In order to gain certain financing advantages, the ICP was folded into a new agency in 1982 called UAMPS. It had 21 municipal members. Doug was the third employee of the new entity.

I asked Doug what the motivation was for UAMPS at the outset. He said it was to bring local control to the communities that wanted the energy and to let the same manage their own destiny. He firmly believed it then and remains committed to that concept to this day. UAMPS began in earnest to diversify its supply portfolio. At that time, the western IOUs were financially stressed and selling assets. UAMPS bid on every opportunity that came before it. The challenge was getting transmission access from UP&L to receive the procured power and resell it to the UAMPS members.

At that time, UP&L was in the throes of merging with Pacific Power. Doug led the intervention not to kill the merger, as some wanted, but to leverage their position to get something out of it … such as greater access to available firm transmission. Doug's strategy won the day.

Doug became the UAMPS general manager in the early 1990s, and I asked him how he assembled a team to cobble together dozens of projects and develop a successful business plan. He said on Day One he made every employee submit their resignation. He wanted to get rid of the accumulated deadwood embedded in the place. Next, he made employees interview for their jobs. He also recruited from outside of the agency to get new talent. Finally, he convinced his Board to pay the prevailing wages to the employees that had high value and competitive opportunities.

I asked Doug, when was the turning point of his GM role … when did you sense that your plan was coming together? He said it was in 1999 during the height of the merger frenzy between UP&L and Pacific Power. He wasn't sure UAMPS' intervention would pay off, but then suddenly everything clicked, and they received what they had requested. Thereafter, UAMPS became a sought-after group and new members petitioned to join .

We spoke a bit about the recent demise of the UAMPS project for a small-scale nuclear energy project. The project received a large grant from DOE, and Doug was concerned that if UAMPS members didn't perform to the letter then the agency would be subject to lawsuits from the vendor (NuScale) and the federal government. However, NuScale also was unable to meet its milestones and the parties came to an amicable understanding. Cash draws on the federal grant money ceased.

I can't imagine there will ever be another colorful impresario like Doug Hunter. He created enormous value from shreds of things that were lying about and that needed vision and direction. He made it happen and the power industry is a better place for his efforts.

ENERGYGPS

Grand Phunk Salsa a la Energy GPS

The Op Ed below is from the team at EnergyGPS with Tim Belden as the lead writer. EnergyGPS covers the intersection of renewables and wholesale markets in its *Renewable Monthly Report*, which is part of the EnergyGPS eCommerce Platinum Plus package. To learn more about Energy GPS' offerings in battery storage please tag us at sales@energygps.com.

Buy Lower, Sell Low

Right when you think you've heard all of the trading advice that's out there, the California market provides a new way to think about things. Of course, we all know the "buy low, sell high" advice. That's trading 101 stuff. But that assumes starting with a "long" position ("buy"). One can also start from a "short" position using the "sell high and buy low" strategy. Any successful electricity trader also knows about the "buy high, sell higher" strategy. This is done when the bulls are running, and you just jump in and go along for the ride a bit. However, thanks to the combination of solar curtailments, high REC prices, and battery storage there is a new strategy – Buy Lower, Sell Low!

What the heck is that all about? Let's start with the "Sell Low" part of the equation. The Energy GPS battery dashboard, which is part of our Platinum Plus subscription package, estimates CAISO battery earnings over time. The highest four hours ("Top Four") in the SP15 DAM averaged about $100 per MWh in 2023. In March of 2023, the average Top Four averaged $107 per MWh. Fast forward to February 2024 when the Top Four averaged $53 per MWh. During the first week of March the Top Four averaged just above $50 per MWh and have remained at that level since. Unfortunately for the battery operators, they are "selling low" compared to last year.

But wait, there's more. Thanks to additional solar generation this year and exploding California REC prices, batteries can "buy lower" this year in a way we've never seen before in electricity markets. During the first four days of March, the lowest-priced four hours ("Bottom Four") came in at an average just below negative $50 per MWh. That's right, batteries were getting paid $50 per MWh to soak excess MWh off the grid. During March of 2023, the Bottom Four in SP15 averaged positive $24 per MWh. Why are the Bottom Four almost $75 per MWh lower in March 2024 compared to a year ago? More solar supply is a small part of the story. But the big part of the story is the high REC prices. If a REC is worth $75 per MWh, then the entity with the rights to that REC should be willing to pay up to $75 per MWh (via negative prices) to avoid curtailment. Somehow, all of this math is shaking out to around negative $50 per MWh in SP15.

SP15	2023							2024		
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Q2	Q3	Q4		Jan	Feb	Mar MTD
DAM Energy Prices										
TB4 Buy Price ($/MWh)	93.78	34.33	23.9	3.54	31.56	20.19		30.1	3.27	
TB4 Sell Price ($/MWh)	178.66	99.37	107.77	67.10	122.72	77.77		88.27	52.84	
Arb Value ($/MWh)*	70.86	59.91	80.3	63.03	86.44	54.55		53.68	49.08	95.00
* Arb Value incorporates the impact of round-trip efficiency losses										

The "Buy Lower and Sell Low" strategy seems to be crushing it. The table above shows the SP15 DAM arbitrage monthly values for Jan-Mar in 2023 and 2024 as well as the quarterly values for other times during 2023.

The March Month to Date (MTD) arbitrage value of $95 per MWh exceeds the Q3 average and is higher than 12 of the 15 months depicted in the table. This has been a pleasant surprise for CAISO SP15 battery owners who have been suffering since September 2023.

Shout Outs and Recipes

Irish Potato and Cheddar Rolls with Chef Laura Manz

"*I couldn't resist the opportunity to explore some Irish recipes for the upcoming St. Patrick's Day celebration. These Irish Potato and Cheddar Rolls are delightful but, in the original recipe, were also a lot of work. This version uses kitchen appliances that make the tasks easier. Bonus that St. Patrick's Day is on a Sunday so you can take your time and maybe enjoy an Irish Coffee along the way.*"

Butter and flour a 12" cast iron skillet and set aside. Cube 4 Tbsp. of (2.5 oz.) butter and place in the freezer until time to use. Peel and cube ½ lb. russet potatoes.

Place in a small pan and cover with water to approximately 1" above the potatoes; add a generous pinch of salt. Bring potatoes to a boil and cook until soft, about 15 minutes. Drain, reserving the liquid, and puree the potatoes in a food processor.

In the bowl of a stand mixer, combine 3¾ cups of flour with 1 tsp of salt. Transfer the mixture to a food processor and pulse with the frozen butter until the butter is about the size of peas. Transfer the mixture back to the mixing bowl. Make a well in the flour mixture and add the potato puree, 3 Tbsp. of sugar and 2 packets of active dry yeast (.5 oz total). Mix with a dough hook until the ingredients are combined.

Heat 2/3 cup of half-and-half for 30 seconds in the microwave. When the temperature is approximately 110° F , combine with 2 Tbsp. of the reserved potato water and 2/3 cup of water. Add the warm mixture to the bowl and knead the mixture for approximately 10 minutes. Transfer the dough to a floured work surface. Divide into twelve pieces, about 4 oz. each. Roll into balls and place in the prepared skillet. Cover with plastic wrap and rest for an hour. When dough has risen, top with 2 ½ oz. grated cheddar cheese, then brush tops with milk. Bake at 425° F for 15 minutes, tent with foil and bake another 10 minutes. Cool for 5 minutes in the pan before serving warm.

It sounds so good, Laura, that I might drop my reticence to baking and try your recipe.

Other food news, this week, I read a disturbing article that advanced what I already knew but hated to admit … highly processed snack foods are bad for your health, including one's mental health. It said, "*New research suggests links between ultra-processed foods—such as chips, many cereals, and most packaged snacks at the grocery store—and changes in the way we learn, remember, and feel. These foods can act like addictive substances … Diets filled with such foods may raise the risk of*

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mental health and sleep problems." I already have enough challenges to deal with, and I don't need mental health issues caused by poor eating habits on top of everything else. Everyone has their favorite snack foods, right? That's why we've decided to avoid potato chips and tortilla chips, opting instead for a large container of Sourdough Pretzels, only available at Costco. Two steps forward in the right direction and one step back, and we acknowledge there's still work to be done .Enter the Kimchi option. About a decade ago we tried a jar of Kimchi. The contents in the container in our fridge never went below half full. I was sure the food was regenerating itself and maybe it was using the fermentation process to expand. Nevertheless, I quickly tired of the taste. But this week I saw a jar of Kimchi at Costco, thought about the junk food article I just read, and decided to give this healthy side dish another try.

I've been eating Kimchi on a bed of warm rice for lunch every day this week. So far, I like it and it's satisfying. Only 2 oz. per serving of Kimchi because the sodium content is a bit high, but on a per ounce basis no higher than a slice of bread.

I noticed on the bottle an advisory to consume the contents by July. The jar has 43 ounces, I'm eating 2 oz. a day, so with any luck I should either detest or adore Kimchi in three weeks. I'll let you know. Snack food away.

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In the section below are your stories if you are a corned-beef-and-cabbage eater. Have a great St. Patrick's Day on Sunday.

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Odds & Ends (_!_)

Have we left any stone unturned? Have we? I think not. Dig in below if you dare.

HEALTH QUESTION & ANSWER SESSION

Q: I've heard that cardiovascular exercise can prolong life. Is this true?

A: Your heart is only good for so many beats, and that's it... don't waste them on exercise. Everything wears out eventually. Speeding up your heart will not make you live longer; that's like saying you can extend the life of your car by driving it faster. Want to live longer? Take a nap.

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Q: Should I cut down on meat and eat more fruits and vegetables?

A: You must grasp logistical efficiencies. What does a cow eat? Hay and corn. And what are these? Vegetables. So, a steak is nothing more than an efficient mechanism of delivering vegetables to your system. Need grain? Eat chicken. Beef is also a good source of field grass (green leafy vegetable). And a pork chop can give you 100% of your recommended daily allowance for vegetable products.

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Q: Should I reduce my alcohol intake?

A: No, not at all. Wine is made from fruit. Brandy is distilled wine, which means they take the water out of the fruity bit, so you get even more of the goodness that way. Beer is also made out of grain. Bottoms up!

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Q: How can I calculate my body/fat ratio?

A: Well, if you have a body and you have body fat, your ratio is one to one. If you have two bodies, your ratio is two to one, etc.

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Q: What are some of the advantages of participating in a regular exercise program?

A: Can't think of a single one, sorry. My philosophy is: No Pain...Good

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Q: Aren't fried foods bad for you?

A: YOU'RE NOT LISTENING!!!. Foods are fried these days in vegetable oil. In fact, they're permeated in it. How could getting more vegetables be bad for you?

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Q: Will sit-ups help prevent me from getting a little soft around the middle?

A: Definitely not! When you exercise a muscle, it gets bigger. You should only be doing sit-ups if you want a bigger stomach.

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Q: Is chocolate bad for me?

A: Are you crazy? HELLO ..... Cocoa beans ... another vegetable!!! It's the best feel-good food around!

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Q: Is swimming good for your figure?

A: If swimming is good for your figure, explain whales to me.

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Q: Is getting in-shape important for my lifestyle?

A: Hey! 'Round' is a shape!

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Well, I hope this has cleared up any misconceptions you may have had about food and diets and remember, "Life should NOT be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in an attractive and well-preserved body, but rather to skid in sideways - Chardonnay in one hand - strawberries in the other - body thoroughly used up, totally worn out, and screaming - WOO HOO! What a Ride!

EuroEnglish

The European Union commissioners have announced that agreement has been reached to adopt English as the preferred language for European communications, rather than German, which was the other possibility.

As part of the negotiations, Her Majesty's Government conceded to the Germans that English spelling had some room for improvement and has accepted a five-year phased plan for what will be known as EuroEnglish (Euro for short).

In the first year, 's' will be used instead of the soft 'c'. Sertainly, sivil servants will resieve this news with joy. Also, the hard 'c' will be replaced with 'k.' Not only will this klear up konfusion, but typewriters kan have one less letter.

There will be growing publik enthusiasm in the sekond year, when the troublesome 'ph' will be replaced by 'f'. This will make words like 'fotograf' 20 persent shorter.

In the third year, publik akseptanse of the new spelling kan be expekted to reach the stage where more komplikated changes are possible. Governments will enkourage the removal of double letters, which have always ben a deterent to akurate speling. Also, al wil agre that the horible mes of silent 'e's in the languag is disgrasful, and they would go.

By the fourth year, peopl wil be reseptiv to steps such as replasing 'th' by 'z' and 'w' by 'v'.

During ze fifz year, ze unesesary 'o' kan be dropd from vords kontaining 'ou', and similar changes vud of kors; be aplid to ozer kombinations of leters.

After zis fifz yer, ve vil hav a reli sensibl riten styl. Zer vil b no mor trubls or difikultis and evrivun vil find it ezi tu understand ech ozer. Ze drem vil finali kum tru.

Guten Tag!