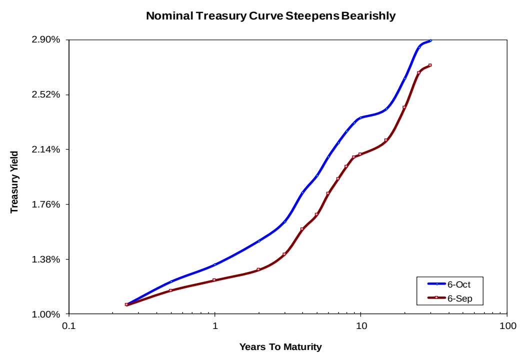
The Macro Environment For Financial Markets

Years of observation have led me to conclude most traders handle losses better than they handle gains. Gains often lead to reckless behavior and trigger inner psychological needs to lose. The economy is no different on a collective basis; good fortune leads to risk-seeking behavior, over-investment in search of yield and the squandering of funds on dubious ventures. The mood at present has swung to one wherein we believe a combination of fiscal stimulus, monetary tightening, a rising dollar and political dysfunction can be ignored. When there is not a cloud in the sky, be careful where you step. The causal chain now is:

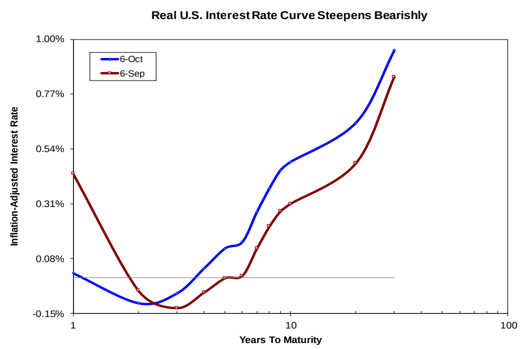
1. The market has accepted the likelihood of a December rate hike;
2. Inflationary expectations have failed at resistance;
3. The secular flattening trend in the U.S. continues;
4. Short-term borrowers are close to terming out short-term debt into the bond market;
5. Swap spreads are shifting higher; and
6. CDS costs have broken resistance.

Key Market Indications

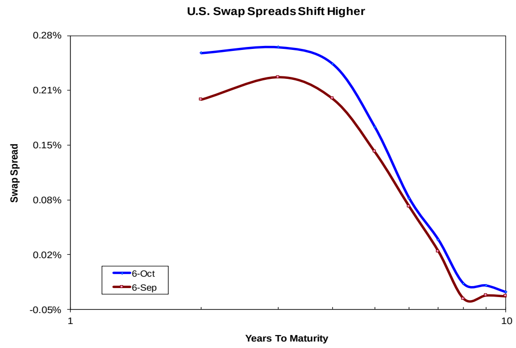
The yield curve began flattening in November 2013, meaning this is close to a four-year trend. Long-term rates have yet to violate their critical support level of 2.40% and TIPS breakevens have yet to test their support level of 1.91%.



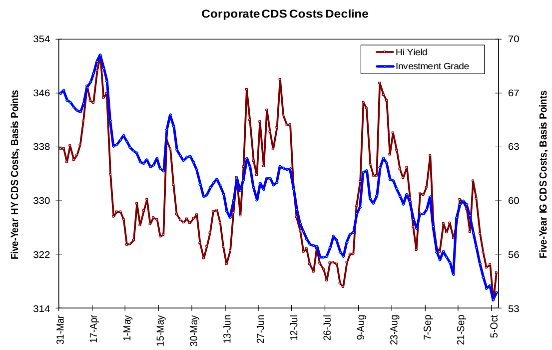
The pseudo-real yield curve steepened bearishly, rising at the long end of the yield curve and declining at one- and two-year maturities. It remains negative for two- and three-year maturities. This curve was common during 2015-2016 period of accelerated global QE. The rise in implied real rates at the long end of the yield curve is insufficient to derail risk-seeking behavior in capital assets.



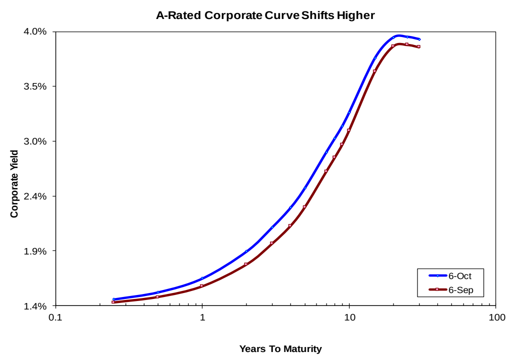
Swap spreads, which rise when floating-rate borrowers want to fix their payments, rose across the maturity spectrum, with the largest shift at the shortest end of the yield curve. Markets are anticipating a steady climb in short-term rates and are not anticipating a further decline in long-term rates.



CDS costs fell for both the investment-grade and high-yield indices. The combination of correlation trades against equities, no deterioration in the economic data and a confined outlook for the path of short-term rates allowed both indices to break their resistance levels of the past year.



The A-rated corporate yield curve shifted slightly higher over the past month. This remains a bull market with limited upside potential.



Market Structure

Softs, Precious Metals and Natural Gas are in structural downtrends, while Livestock is in a structural uptrend. The EM index and the dollar index moved into structural uptrends, while ten-year UST moved into a bearish consolidation.

	N-Day Speed	Market Structure	Trend Oscillator	HLC Volatility	Daily Trend Rate Oct. 9 - 13
BBerg	29	Trending	-0.083	7.2%	
BBerg Grain	15	Transitional	-0.020	11.4%	
BBerg Ind. Metl	21	Trending	0.075	16.1%	
BBerg Pre. Metl	29	Trending	-0.269	10.6%	-0.31%
BBerg Softs	29	Trending	-0.136	15.5%	-0.81%
BBerg Nat. Gas	28	Trending	-0.207	17.4%	-0.03%
BBerg Petroleum	29	Trending	-0.005	18.0%	
BBerg Livestock	27	Trending	0.275	12.6%	0.45%
Dollar Index	28	Trending	0.191	6.7%	0.16%
S&P 500 Index	29	Trending	0.435	4.8%	0.04%
EAFE Index	10	Sideways	0.032	5.4%	
EM Index	29	Trending	0.140	6.0%	0.11%
Ten-year UST (price)	4	Sideways	-0.041	4.0%	

Performance Measures

The entire Energy complex retreated strongly on evidence of supply stability after the hurricanes. Industrial Metals advanced on increased Chinese demand, while Precious Metals continued to retreat on decreased risk-aversion. For all of the palavering about a reemergent bull market in physical commodities, the main Bloomberg total return index is down on all timeframes over the past year.

Commodity Total Returns

	Five-Days	One Month	Six Months	One Year
Bloomberg Index	-0.61%	-0.91%	-1.74%	-1.25%
Grains Sub-Index	-0.76%	-0.19%	-5.45%	-6.19%
Corn	-1.46%	-1.81%	-9.43%	-8.15%
Soybeans	0.43%	1.15%	1.84%	-2.31%
Wheat	-1.04%	1.40%	-6.84%	-6.52%
Energy Sub-Index	-3.54%	0.46%	-7.06%	-10.54%
Petroleum Sub-Index	-3.14%	1.77%	-2.56%	-3.97%
WTI	-4.59%	2.64%	-8.02%	-10.28%
Brent	-2.15%	3.64%	-1.61%	-2.61%
ULSD	-3.63%	-0.34%	4.82%	3.27%
Gasoline	-2.00%	-1.29%	-1.62%	-1.50%
Natural Gas	-4.77%	-3.36%	-19.03%	-26.89%
Precious Metals Sub-Index	-0.38%	-6.01%	-1.54%	-0.64%
Gold	-0.75%	-5.57%	1.02%	0.91%
Silver	0.70%	-7.28%	-8.29%	-4.94%
Industrial Metals Sub-Index	2.30%	0.34%	11.55%	29.20%
Copper	2.53%	-0.33%	13.02%	37.34%
Aluminum	2.52%	2.29%	8.57%	26.09%
Nickel	0.93%	-8.76%	3.27%	2.31%
Zinc	2.43%	7.21%	20.56%	38.22%
Softs Sub-Index	0.37%	-3.47%	-12.81%	-27.22%
Coffee	1.54%	-0.42%	-12.04%	-19.68%
Sugar	-0.83%	-4.30%	-20.40%	-42.78%
Cotton	0.59%	-7.63%	-3.85%	3.14%
Livestock Sub-Index	1.53%	3.46%	4.43%	25.40%
Cattle	1.47%	3.86%	3.45%	22.39%
Hogs	1.65%	2.81%	5.62%	30.44%

The USD gained against all of the majors save the SEK. Any move toward fiscal stimulus combined with monetary tightening must produce such an outcome unless offset by similar policies elsewhere. This is before we have to account for special situations such as the GBP declining under Brexit difficulties and the Catalan question vexing the EUR.

Currency Returns

	Five-Days	One Month	Six Months	One Year
Euro	-0.71%	-1.57%	10.20%	5.19%
Chinese yuan	-0.94%	-0.84%	3.57%	0.22%
Japanese yen	-0.12%	-3.04%	-1.63%	-7.72%
British pound	-2.48%	0.18%	4.78%	3.57%
Swiss franc	-1.16%	-2.35%	2.58%	0.11%
Canadian dollar	-0.45%	-2.42%	7.06%	5.50%
Australian dollar	-0.86%	-2.91%	2.94%	2.40%
Swedish krona	0.36%	-1.70%	11.15%	6.28%
Norwegian krone	-0.48%	-2.47%	7.79%	0.70%
New Zealand dollar	-1.61%	-1.49%	1.76%	-1.00%
Indian rupee	-0.14%	-1.94%	-1.28%	2.03%
Brazilian real	0.22%	-1.75%	-0.38%	2.30%
Mexican peso	-1.49%	-4.01%	1.17%	3.81%
Chilean peso	1.03%	-2.23%	3.80%	5.41%
Colombian peso	-0.07%	-0.91%	-2.85%	-1.21%
Bloomberg-JP Morgan Asian dollar index (spot)	-0.16%	-1.24%	1.77%	0.22%

The EAFE in general and Eurozone markets in particular retreated under renewed political stresses. However, both the EM index and North American markets more than offset this and kept the global bull market in equities intact.

Equity Total Returns

	Five-Days	One Month	Six Months	One Year
MSCI World Free	0.72%	2.73%	10.59%	20.55%
North America	1.18%	3.51%	9.21%	20.17%
Latin America	1.30%	0.58%	13.50%	24.16%
Emerging Market Free	2.00%	2.00%	16.58%	23.46%
EAFE	-0.06%	2.25%	12.84%	20.05%
Pacific	0.55%	0.97%	9.45%	14.82%
Eurozone	-0.49%	1.60%	17.14%	29.82%

Both CTAs and hedge funds had a strong week, suggesting they adopted the risk-on trades of being long equities, short sovereign bonds and long the USD.

CTA/Hedge Fund Returns

	Five-Days	One Month	Six Months	One Year
Newedge CTA	1.29%	-2.53%	-3.23%	-7.99%
Newedge Trend	0.99%	-1.76%	-2.29%	-5.45%
Newedge Short-Term	0.41%	0.18%	-1.58%	-7.30%
HFR Global Hedge Fund	0.43%	0.97%	3.23%	5.97%
HFR Macro/CTA	0.49%	-0.88%	1.11%	-1.09%
HFR Macro: Sytematic Diversified CTA	0.59%	-2.15%	-0.13%	-3.90%

Futures trading involves the substantial risk of loss and is not suitable for all investors. Each investor must consider whether this is a suitable investment since you may lose all of or more than your initial investment. Past performance is not indicative of future results.