

Fighting the Good Fight

It's the same old story. We win some battles to protect the environment and lose others. It is all part of the give-and-take that comes with creating change and making progress. The problem is that dire threats like global warming, air pollution and overdevelopment are leaving us with little time to play the give-and-take game.

On April 18, 2002, Americans and the world won an important victory when the U.S. Senate voted by 60 votes not to allow drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The refuge, widely considered to be the crown jewel of the American park system, is the birthing ground of the porcupine caribou, the resting spot of over 180 species of migratory birds, and the home of grizzly, black, and polar bears.

Oil companies like BP Amoco had been fighting hard to gain access to this special place, which, according to the U.S. Geological Survey, contains only 6 months' worth of oil not available for another 10 years.

Thankfully, our elected officials decided to protect the Arctic Refuge from oil drilling. But will they protect the rest of our public lands?

In 1999, over 1 million people sent public comments asking the Clinton administration to protect the last remaining 58.5 million acres of untouched national forests from road building, mining, and development. President Clinton responded: He granted permanent protection to all national forests.

But the policy has not yet gone into effect. And since President Bush has been sworn into office, his administration has done nothing to stop paper companies and western states from suing the government, demanding access to America's last remaining pristine areas.

Protection of public lands is only one of the many environmental regulations being attacked by powerful special interests and the Bush administration. Right now, key protections for our air, water and endangered species are at risk. Environmental groups and citizens across the country have joined in an effort to defend our environmental and public health protections, like the Clean Air Act, the Endangered Species Act and toxic waste cleanup laws.

This issue of Earth Tips features the work organizations are doing to protect the planet and create a more sustainable society. As INFORM's Joanna Underwood points out in our Insider's Perspective, "Every year, the risks are greater, and every year, the need to address these problems in time gets more urgent." **E**

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Earthday Resources for Living Green now houses the program of Earth Day 2000. We are expanding to provide you with even more resources for sustainable living, and evolving to operate entirely from the internet. Visit

www.earthdayresources.org to see the changes and get more from your organization for green living. Members receive Earth Tips five times per year. For membership information, call us at Earthday Resources.

Correspondence

We are interested in your questions, comments and suggestions for future topics to be covered in Earth Tips. Please address all correspondence, as well as address changes to:

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Urban sprawl is taking away green spaces, polluting the environment, and destroying our sense of community. Homes are further apart and further away from schools, work and community centers. Big chain box stores like Home Depot, Office Max and Borders pave over our open spaces and create vacant lots where neighborhood stores used to be.

Fortunately, more and more citizens across the country are getting involved with their communities to stop sprawl and better plan development. Green Guerillas, for instance, helps New York City residents invigorate their neighborhoods by planting community gardens.

Liz Christy, a Lower East Side artist, started Green Guerillas in 1973. She and her neighbors turned a vacant lot in their neighborhood into a vibrant community garden. Over the years, Green Guerillas created a city-wide movement, a vital resource center for New York City's network of 600 community gardening groups. Green Guerillas fights to preserve community gardens for future generations, trains the next generation of community garden leaders, and helps gardeners grow food and fight hunger.

Like all open space, community gardens are always threatened by development. In 1999, former New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani tried to auction off more than 100 community gardens.

Thankfully, Green Guerillas and other groups saved these gardens and obtained a restraining order to protect the more than 400 gardens that have no permanent status. Restraining orders, however, do not provide permanent protection.

Steve Frillman,

Executive Director of Green Guerillas, says that "community gardens have come to replace the community centers that cities no longer have. They are a place for people to come together, a place that people depend on."

Community garden associations exist all over the country and many are networked through the American Community Garden Association.



START A COMMUNITY GARDEN

- Look for vacant lots in your town. Ask your town officials if you can put the area to better use by planting a community garden.
- Get your neighbors involved. Ask them to help you secure the site and invite them to plant flowers and crops.
- Attend town meetings. Frillman recommends being proactive in protecting community gardens: Let officials know that preservation is important to you and your neighbors.
- For more information, check out the Green Guerillas Web site at www.greenguerillas.org.

Beyond Recycling: The Zero Waste Solution

As today's throwaway society consumes more and more products, we also generate more and more waste. Much of this waste gets burned in incinerators or buried in landfills, causing a series of environmental problems including water pollution, air pollution and loss of open space.

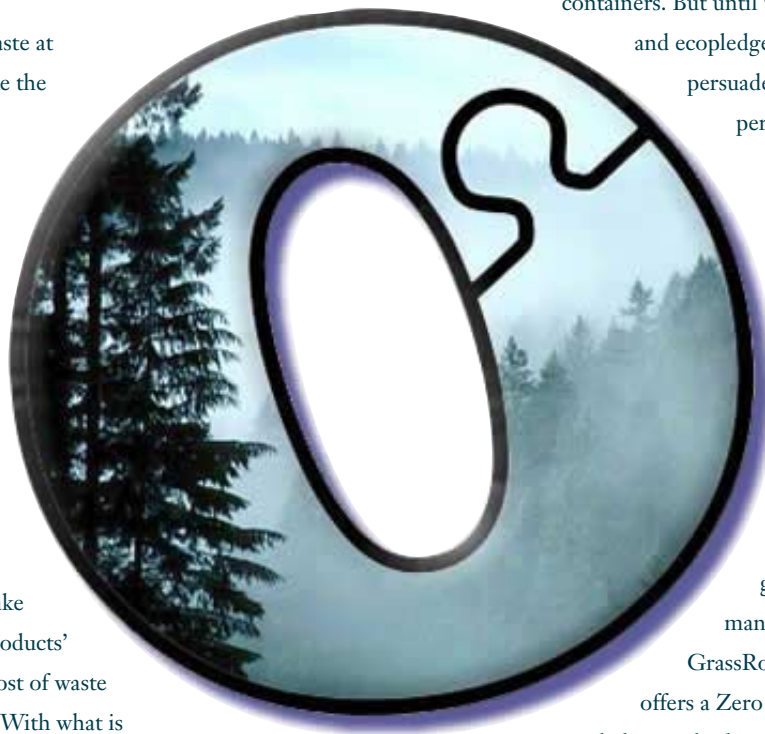
But what if we didn't create waste at all? That's the vision of groups like the GrassRoots Recycling Network (GRRN), INFORM, and ecopledge.com. These organizations are working to eliminate waste at the source by requiring manufacturers to take back their products when they are no longer useful. Currently, 75 percent of products discarded in municipal landfills and incinerators are manufactured. If manufacturers were required to take back products at the end of the products' lifecycles, they would factor the cost of waste into the total cost of the product. With what is called "extended producer responsibility," reusing, reducing and recycling old products makes financial sense for product manufacturers—and it gets us closer to achieving zero waste.

Extended producer responsibility works. Currently, 10 states require a 5- or 10-cent deposit on bottles and cans, giving consumers an incentive to recycle, and manufacturers a duty to take back their old, discarded products. In those 10 states, citizens recycle more containers than in the other 40 states combined.

Now, if manufacturers were required to take back their containers in all 50 states rather than being given cost-free unlimited access to municipal landfills and incinerators for their discarded products, they would change the way they produce their bottles: With so many discarded bottles and cans coming back to the manufacturers, it would

make financial sense for them to reuse, or at least recycle the containers.

GRRN and the Container Recycling Institute are working to make sure every state requires manufacturers to take back their containers. But until that happens, groups like GRRN and ecopledge.com have been working to persuade Coke and Pepsi to use 25-percent recycled plastic in their bottles. Go to www.grrn.org and www.ecopledge.com for more information on these campaigns.



HOW YOU CAN HELP TO ACHIEVE ZERO WASTE

- Work with your town officials to set zero waste goals—not simply waste management strategies. The GrassRoots Recycling Network offers a Zero Waste Community Activity Kit to help you do this. You can get the kit at http://www.grrn.org/zerowaste/kit/event/zw_kit.html.
- Purchase products that can be reused and contain no packaging.
- Ask manufacturers to eliminate wasteful packaging and take products back after they are no longer useful.
- Sign the ecopledge to persuade Pepsi to use recycled plastic in their bottles and Dell Computers to take back their computers when they are no longer of use to consumers. www.ecopledge.com. **E**

GrassRoots Recycling Network's Zero Waste symbol is a trademark of GRRN.

Insider's Perspective: Joanna DeHaven Underwood President of INFORM, Inc.



Joanna Underwood is the founder and president of INFORM, a group dedicated to protecting the environment and safeguarding human health by encouraging changes in the ways companies conduct their business. INFORM's reports are used by government, industry and environmental leaders around the world. In 1992, INFORM's research on the chemical industry and the organization's leading role in promoting pollution prevention earned it one of the U.S. EPA's most prestigious awards.

For more information, go to www.informinc.org.

EARTHDAY RESOURCES: How did you get involved in the environmental movement?

UNDERWOOD: My mother and father were very concerned about social issues. My mother was involved in Planned Parenthood and my father was very active with Alcoholics Anonymous. Social issues were often the topic over dinner.

My parents never asked me to care. Their commitment to issues showed me how to care, and I was drawn to the idea of protecting our world and its resources. I grew up assuming everyone worked to make things better. That kind of environment was formative in my life, and I think it is absolutely critical to instill these values early on in the next generation.

EARTHDAY RESOURCES: What changes have you seen since you started INFORM?

UNDERWOOD: Today we have a more sophisticated understanding of the consequences of waste and pollution. When INFORM started, our leaders thought, amazingly, that more landfills would solve the waste problem, that picking up litter would clean up the environment, and that tall smokestacks would reduce air pollution. Today, more and more people have seen images of the world from space and realize how tiny and fragile we are. This extraordinary awakening allows us to talk about the right kinds of solutions—those that prevent pollution and waste in the first place.

Many Americans are working to find ways of living and doing business that are sustainable: using natural resources much more carefully, learning to reuse and recycle, shifting from fossil fuels to solar technology, replacing toxic chemical processes to ones using benign feedstock. Now that we are looking in the right direction, we are beginning to develop waste-free technologies and eco-friendly products—to see dramatic changes.

EARTHDAY RESOURCES: What prevents businesses from operating in more sustainable ways?

UNDERWOOD: To some extent, it is the investment they have made in their traditional practices. It is hard to break habits. For example, shifting from just managing and treating industrial plant wastes to preventing them means involving plant managers who know how the plants work, not just environmental engineers. It means a huge redefining of jobs and goals. Yet pollution prevention saves resources and money. And when workers get the idea, it is exciting. They realize they are helping protect their children's futures.

Another reason business have been slow to change is because our laws until the early 1990s focused on “waste” and where to put it. They didn't provide incentives to business to explore really new intrinsically cleaner technologies or products that use resources more efficiently. But now this is also changing.

EARTHDAY RESOURCES: What is our biggest challenge now in protecting the environment?

UNDERWOOD: Our biggest challenge is time. Six billion people live in the world today and we may have 1 billion more in 10 years. The Western world has shown an example of wasteful consumerism that developing countries want to follow.

The speed with which the world's population is growing together with the desire of billions to live a consumption-oriented lifestyle means that we are taking enormous risks with our planet. We are squandering the world's natural resources, polluting our air, damaging our health and causing global climate change. Every year, the risks are greater, and every year, the need to address these problems in time gets more urgent.

EARTHDAY RESOURCES: Are you optimistic about the future?

UNDERWOOD: Every day, you can choose how you want to spend your 24 hours. You can curse the darkness or you can light a candle. You can march and protest, which are important strategies for bringing attention to problems, or you can focus on solutions. To me, the exciting part is finding solutions, lighting candles. **E**



Constructive Engagement

A steady stream of recent stories reveal that consumer activism is having an effect on companies. Among the developments:

- Starbucks Coffee Co. recently announced new coffee purchasing guidelines developed in partnership with Conservation International's Center for Environmental Leadership in Business, aimed at purchasing coffee grown and processed by suppliers who meet important environmental, social, economic, and quality standards.

To launch the guidelines, Starbucks will enlist the support of coffee suppliers who are sustainability advocates. Starbucks has instituted a point system that rewards performance in several categories. Point totals are based on a supplier's ability to meet the sustainability guidelines; suppliers that earn more points will receive higher purchasing preference from Starbucks. The company, which already pays premium prices for its coffee, will now provide additional premiums of up to 10¢ per pound to vendors based upon how well their coffee samples meet the standards.

More information about the Starbucks-CI partnership can be found online at <http://www.starbucks.com/aboutus/shadegrown.asp?ci=2>.

- Staples announced it will begin selling an environmentally preferable paper made of 90% post-consumer waste and 10% tree-free fibers in 1,000 of its stores across the US.

The Vanguard Recycled Plus paper, manufactured by Eugene, Ore.-based Living Tree Paper Company, is made from recycled office paper and HempFlax, a combination of hemp and flax fibers. The paper is 100% chlorine-free in the HempFlax portion and acid- and process-free throughout, and can be used in ink-jet printers, laser printers, and copiers. The premium paper is expected to sell for \$6.99 per 500-sheet ream and will feature a label stating No new trees went into this paper!

Staples says it also has begun taking steps to promote other recycled-content products. Its stores use shelf tags with the recycling



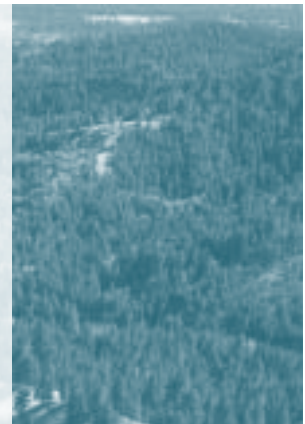
logo to designate recycled-content products. In several of its Seattle stores, the company is experimenting with a “Green Shop” — a section of the store, marked with green shelves, that contains all of its recycled-content products.

- After years of dueling with environmentalists, Boise Cascade has decided it will phase out its old-growth harvest over the next two years. In recent years, eco-activists have waged a campaign against the company for continuing to cut trees in old-growth forests. But Boise says its decision wasn't based on such pressure. CEO George Harad said that given the current direction of federal forest policy, which already was phasing out old growth sales, the company decided the time was right.

- Twenty Canadian publishing companies have pledged to stop using wood pulp from ancient forests by the end of 2004. The pledge came as part of the efforts of Markets Initiative (<http://www.marketsinitiative.org>), an activist group promoting sustainable forestry. The 20 firms include Canadian subsidiaries of global book publishers Penguin, Knopf, Doubleday, and Random House.

Meanwhile, Cornell University Press announced the adoption of new paper purchasing policies to reduce office paper consumption by 25% and require paper made from

post-consumer recycled, agricultural, and chlorine-free fiber for its book publishing. Working with Resource Conservation Alliance (<http://www.rca-info.org>), another activist group, it has notified its printers of its 2003 deadline and has asked printers and distributors to verify the environmental characteristics of their paper lines.



- Trader Joe's, a U.S. grocery and specialty food chain with 159 stores in 15 states, has committed to going “GE-free,” forswearing genetically engineered goods in its private-labeled products. The initiative follows a protest campaign among a coalition of activist groups. Some 85% of products sold at Trader Joe's carry its private label. **E**

ECOLOGUE: Friendly Fire

When he was elected, some of my optimistic friends thought George W. Bush might not as bad for the environment as many others anticipated. And they had reasonable grounds for that. Bush's father, when he was president, enacted several progressive policies, such as Green Lights and Energy Star, which promoted energy-efficiency. And the Clean Air Act of 1990, one of the strongest environmental acts ever, was signed by Bush.

So maybe Bush II would follow in his father's footsteps, my friends reasoned. And maybe, to show that he wasn't the patsy of the oil companies, he might take some bold steps towards renewables or high-mileage cars.

So much for optimism.

There is much to fear from the efforts of Bush & Co.—often in concert with Congress—to relax environmental laws and oversight under the cover of war and the in name of homeland security, economic recovery, and “giving business a voice.”

Consider a few recent developments and revelations:

- The Bush administration plans to give major polluters a variety

of exemptions from a Clean Air Act requirement that power plants install updated pollution controls when they renovate.

- It has removed a provision from hard-rock mining regulations that would have given federal land managers leeway to reject proposals for mines that could cause irreparable damage to Western landscapes or water sources.
- It removed hurdles to road building in large backwoods areas of the national forests. Many of these areas, which are not included on the official inventory of roadless areas, provide key habitat for wildlife.
- It backed away from a commitment by the first President Bush not to allow wetland acreage to decline.
- It rescinded rules that aimed to keep businesses that violate environmental and other federal laws from obtaining government contracts.

And then there's energy. Since September 11, Congress and the administration have recast some of their most controversial energy schemes—the push for Arctic oil and the hoped-for rejuvenation of the nuclear industry, to name just two—under the guise of “energy security” in the hopes that they might now pass muster. The lack of resolve to boost vehicle fuel-economy standards and even the bailout of the airline industry—roughly equal to Amtrak's budget for 30

Taking It Back

Members of the National Electronics Product Stewardship Initiative, including more than a dozen major electronics manufacturers, have agreed to charge fees or pay front-end costs on their equipment in the US to help fund recycling, including supporting related federal legislation. The agreement, announced last month at an electronics recycling forum in Washington, D.C., is billed by participants as a major step forward in solving the problem of “e-waste” from computers and other electronics.

The group, whose membership includes Hewlett-Packard, Panasonic, and Sony, will use the funds raised to set up a collection and recycling network. NEPSI said in a statement drafted at its March meeting that its financing system cannot be implemented immediately across the country. It said it would develop steps to boost the collection and recycling infrastructure and outline steps to be taken in the interim.

Environmental activists pushing for takeback laws were appreciative, but not convinced. Calling the agreement “the first mile-marker of a public policy marathon,” a statement from the Computer TakeBack Campaign warned that the NEPSI announcement “must not divert attention away from dozens of issues not yet resolved and equal numbers not yet addressed.” Those include phaseout of hazardous substances, e-waste collection and recycling standards, and bans on export of hazardous waste. **E**



years—have demonstrated the power that industry lobbyists have over sound environmental and economic policy.

To be sure, not every environmental law is worth keeping; some are ripe for change, given their frustratingly narrow focus and Draconian inflexibility. And most activists haven't shown much passion for working with business and government to craft sensible solutions that permit multiple private uses of land and resources while protecting critical habitat.

But government, with the help of industry, seems to be running roughshod over environmental protection these days. And that's not just bad for the environment. It's also bad for business.

Never mind the risk that the current political climate could backfire against business, engendering public outcry for tougher environmental laws and greater business scrutiny while further eroding the trust most citizens already have for companies' commitments and actions on protecting the environment.

More troubling is the apparent lack of understanding among the national leadership that environmental security is essential to our national interests. Clean air and water and an abundance of natural resources are key to the freedoms Americans cherish and protect. Renewable and distributed energy technologies can shield our interests far greater than any militia can.

In the end, no nation's economy has flourished for long while its environment—and the health of its people—were under attack. It would be a shame if America's leaders, in their efforts to help business prosper, ultimately undermined our safety, wealth, and health. **E**

—*Joel Makower*



The Cutting Edge

* **AUTO-SUGGESTION:** The Clean Car Campaign (<http://www.cleancarcampaign.org>) has joined forces with US automotive dealers, state, and city officials, and environmental groups to “Switch-the-Switch,” in which participating dealers will replace mercury switches with mercury-free alternatives in customer vehicles at no charge during the event, and state and city officials will do so in vehicle fleets.

* **GREEN SKIS:** The National Ski Areas Association has launched an online database of sustainability initiatives at ski resorts. Dubbed the “Green Room” (<http://www.nsaa.org/media/s/greenroompr.asp>), it is part of Sustainable Slopes, a set of principles endorsed by 75% of the US snow resort industry. The database showcases innovative actions resorts are taking in 21 topics, from water quality to wildlife habitat.

* **COOL SCHOOLS:** Noting that “some colleges could become completely climate neutral for around \$30 per year,” the Green House Network is organizing higher education institutions to facilitate reducing and offsetting greenhouse gas emissions on campus. More info: <http://www.greenhousenet.org>.

* **ROCK OF AGES:** Echoes, the latest album from rock musicians Pink Floyd, will be “carbon neutral,” with the number of trees planted by the rockers pegged to the number of albums sold. The 2-CD set should net four new long-term indigenous forests, says the band.

* **MATERIAL CHANGE:** Men's Wearhouse has partnered with trendy ChiPants to launch a menswear line made of organic cotton and hemp—“a new genre of environmentally sensitive clothing with caring manufacturing ethics.” **E**