

Don't Be Fooled 2001

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Introduction

2001 Don't Be Fooled Awards:

1. BP Amoco
 2. Boise Cascade
 3. Biotechnology Institute
 4. Chevron
 5. Coca-Cola Company
 6. Nuclear Energy Institute
 7. Weyerhaeuser
 8. DuPont
 9. American Plastics Council
 10. Royal Dutch Shell
- Tips for Consumers

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Introduction

This report announces the recipients of the 2001 Don't Be Fooled Awards. American consumers are increasingly looking for products from companies that are environmentally responsible, but find it difficult to sort through the numerous claims corporations make in their advertisements and product labels. Earth Day Resources, formerly Earth Day 2000, has released this report annually for the last ten years to call attention to the past year's worst greenwashers, corporations that have made misleading or false claims about the environmental benefits of their products and industries. "Don't Be Fooled" describes companies' greenwashing attempts as well as the truth behind their misleading claims. This year, ecopledge.com joins with Earth Day Resources in releasing the report.

About ecopledge.com

Ecopledge.com is a national coalition of environmental organizations which asks one corporation from each sector of the economy to make a simple, specific change to reduce its impact on the environment. Ecopledge.com participants are consumers, investors and students who pledge not to buy from, invest in or seek jobs with these corporations if they fail to take the simple action requested. The full text of the pledge, as well as information about current campaign targets and activities, can be found at www.ecopledge.com.

About Earth Day Resources:

Earth Day Resources for Living Green keeps the original spirit of Earth Day alive, giving individuals the resources they need to make the vision of a cleaner, healthier planet for the next century a reality. We provide concrete information to individuals, helping them make the best choices in their personal life that promote the health of the planet. Earth Day Resources was formed in 1991 to help consumers live out the commitments they made to protect the environment on Earth Day 1990. Earth Day Resources does this in several ways:

Earth Day Resources Newsletter

The Earth Day Resources newsletter is an easy-to-read guide designed to help consumers live their lifestyles to reflect their commitment to a healthier planet. The newsletter is produced five times per year and is full of simple tips on a wide variety of issues from recycling to ozone depletion, from eco-tourism to energy efficiency. The newsletter features articles on prominent figures in the green consumer movement and sorts out the "green" from the greenwashing.

Countdown 2000 Report

Every April, Earth Day Resources issues its Countdown 2000 report, an annual check-up on the health of our planet. On Earth Day 1990, environmentalists set out goals for progress we would need to make to clean up the planet. Once a year Earth Day Resources reports on the progress towards those goals.

Truth in Environmental Advertising Campaign

The Don't Be Fooled report is a public education component of Earth Day Resource's Truth in Environmental Advertising Campaign. Earth Day Resources also campaigns for tougher environmental consumer laws and more accurate labeling and advertising. Earth Day Resources, with U.S. PIRG, Ozone Action, and the Environmental Law Foundation, has successfully settled two lawsuits against Sanyo and Maytag for failing to disclose to consumers that their refrigerators, freezers and coolers contained ozone-depleting chemicals.

It will take more than one day of action to turn our society toward a sustainable future. We can achieve amazing results if we join together take change by providing consumers with information they can use to make everyday environmental choices in the marketplace. As defined by the 10th edition Concise Oxford English Dictionary:

greenwash: (n) Disinformation disseminated by an organization so as to present an environmentally responsible public image.

Derivatives: greenwashing (n). Origin from green on the pattern of whitewash.

The History of Greenwashing

Although it is difficult to pinpoint its origins, the level of greenwashing in advertising significantly increased after Earth Day 1990. Millions of individuals joined together to protest the degradation of the planet on Earth Day 1990 and corporations were forced to realize the level to which consumers took environmental concerns into account when making purchases.

Many companies began making misleading claims about their products to capitalize on consumers' desire to preserve the planet by buying green products. A 1999 Cone/Roper Survey found that Americans are more likely to conduct business with companies supporting strong causes such as environmental protection. Eighty-three percent of respondents say they have a more positive image of a company supporting a cause they care about, and 61 percent of respondents believe cause-related marketing should be a standard business practice.

From hair spray to household cleaners, consumers have been fooled by environmental product claims advertised by corporations. The problem is aggravated because the shoppers cannot confirm whether a product is truly ozone-friendly or biodegradable in

the same way they can check whether a laundry detergent removes stains better or batteries last longer.

Misleading claims on product packaging only scratch the surface. Corporations with less than perfect records have tried to portray themselves in a green manner by claiming to help the earth in various print, radio and television advertisements. Past tactics include Chevron ads showing bear cubs to imply that its products are safe or friendly to the environment and wildlife. Procter and Gamble has distributed educational materials designed to educate students about solid waste with a clear bias favoring its products. Greenwashing is likely to continue far into the future, as evidenced by the inclusion of the term in the 10th edition Concise Oxford English Dictionary. Earth Day 2000 is doing its part to empower consumers to outsmart greenwashers.

The Campaign for Truth in Environmental Advertising

Historically, there have been a number of attempts to put an end to greenwashing. One of the first steps was taken in November 1990 when a task force of 10 state attorney generals released "The Green Report." The report reviewed the controversies around the labels of "degradable," "recyclable," and "recycled." The task force recognized the growth in environmental claims made it difficult for consumers to sort legitimate claims from greenwashing. The Green Report established a need for federal standards to guide environmental advertising and recommended specific standards to incorporate into legislation regarding the validity of environmental claims.

These efforts directly resulted in further attempts to regulate misleading claims about the environmental consequences of products. First, Senator Frank Lautenberg of New Jersey sponsored a bill called the Environmental Marketing Claims Act in the 1991-2 congressional session. Unfortunately, the bill failed to move through Congress and has not yet been reintroduced.

Second, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) issued a series of guidelines about environmental product claims for businesses in June 1992. Known as the "Green Guides," the FTC worked to refine the guidelines, which were completed in 1998. (These can be found at <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/grnrule/guides980427.htm>.) Although these guidelines define common terms used in environmental marketing claims, the FTC claims that, "the guidelines are not, themselves, legally enforceable, but are administrative guidelines for present FTC laws on overall marketing claims." The FTC will contact corporations that do not adhere to the guidelines, but the FTC allows products to remain on the shelf for months until the company depletes its existing "misleading" packaging supply. Even under investigation, companies continue to profit off of consumers who believe they are buying green products. Recently, the FTC confirmed that an alliance was falsely advertising the environmental benefits of nuclear energy, but no action was taken as the FTC believed that the alliance might not fall under

its jurisdiction. The incident confirms the need for legal definitions to effectively halt greenwashing offenses.

There is good news, however. One of the first green labeling statutes, which gives strict legal definitions to terms like "recycled," became law in California in 1990. The law was challenged by the Association of National Advertisers, which includes companies like Procter and Gamble. The association claimed the green label statute was unconstitutional because it infringed on the right to free speech. They lost the case and the statute was further upheld in federal court in 1995.

However, current guidelines are far less strict on corporations who create false images of themselves as environmentally friendly, such as many of the enormous oil, chemical and paper companies. These companies have deep financial resources to take out full-page color advertisements in the most popular magazines to portray themselves as environmentally responsible although the record shows them as major contributors to environmental degradation or opponents to sensible environmental reform.

The first steps have been taken, but corporations need to be held legally accountable for their actions. It is time to stop placing the burden on consumers to distinguish between green rhetoric and green responsibility.

And The 2001 Don't Be Fooled Awards go to:

1. British-Petroleum Amoco

Beyond Petroleum or Beyond Credibility

“Beyond Petroleum,” clearly implies that BP Amoco is redirecting its business strategy away from fossil fuels and toward renewable sources of energy – a message that is quite effectively relayed through the company’s advertising. In one of the ads typifying the campaign, we see an abandoned, apparently fossil-fueled car in the middle of an arid desert and headlined by the rhetorical question, “Can solar power become more mainstream?” The answer, of course, is “yes” and BP Amoco is better positioned than any company in the marketplace to make it happen. But if one judges BP Amoco by its actions, as opposed to its ads, it seems that the oil giant is “Beyond Credibility,” rather than “Beyond Petroleum.”

To be fair, BP Amoco should get credit for also being the largest solar energy company in the world. To be accurate, though, BP acquired this status by acquiring the Solorex company in 1999, and still spends only \$16 toward the development of solar energy for every \$10,000 it spends on oil exploration and development. And it’s not as if the company lacks the financial resources to sink more money into the development of renewable energy. On the contrary, BP posted a record annual profit of \$14.2 billion dollars in the year 2000 – more than \$400 per second.

Meanwhile, BP Amoco continues to aggressively pursue new petroleum-based ventures all over the globe – including some of the planet’s most ecologically sensitive areas such as the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. In addition to Alaska, where it will spend \$5 billion in the next five years on oil exploration and production, the company is also active in Venezuela, Egypt, Colombia, the Caspian region and elsewhere.

BP Amoco also has a long list of spills, accidents, violations, and pollution. Between January 1997 and March 1998, BP Amoco was responsible for 104 oil spills in America's Arctic and in 1999 pled guilty to a federal felony connected to illegal dumping of hazardous waste at its Endicott Oil Field near Prudhoe Bay, Alaska. As part of a plea agreement, BP Amoco agreed to pay \$22 million in criminal and civil penalties. BP Amoco also agreed to pay \$6.5 million to settle civil claims related to the illegal dumping and the maximum \$500,000 criminal fine for violating federal safe drinking water laws.

Just recently, BP Amoco was responsible for two additional oil spills Prudhoe Bay, Alaska – on the very same day. On February 20, 2001, somewhere between 5000 to 9700 gallons of oil combined to cover 400 square yards, and took workers 61.5 hours to contain. Prudhoe Bay, which was once a pristine area like the Refuge, now averages around 500 spills a year and is covered by 1500 miles of roads and pipelines.

Regardless of its “Beyond Petroleum” advertising campaign, BP Amoco appears committed, over the long term, to oil and gas.

To contact BP Amoco with questions or concerns, call (312) 856-6111 or visit its website at www.bpamoco.com.

2. Boise Cascade

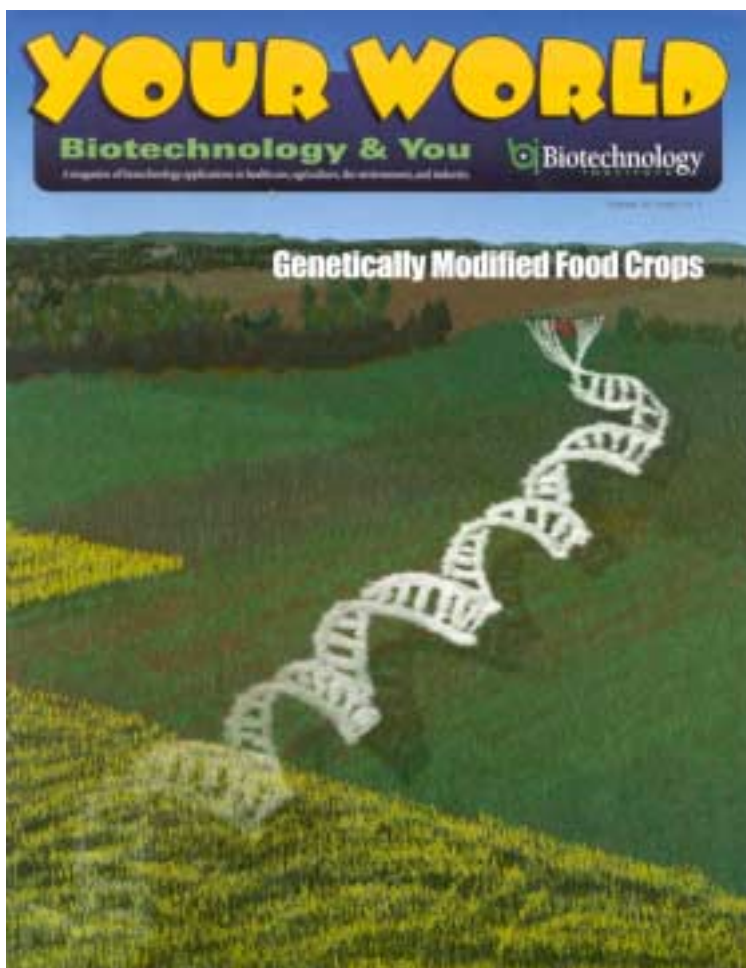
If you were to casually peruse a Boise Cascade advertisement or the company’s web site, you might think you were having a close encounter with the Sierra Club. Aside from numerous references to “forest stewardship,” “growing forests for the future” and “sustainable forestry,” the breathtaking wilderness photography makes National Geographic look like Popular Mechanics.

Unstated among the cavalcade of feel-good sound bytes, however, is the fact that Boise Cascade is still manufacturing wood and paper products made with wood harvested from old-growth forests and national forest areas. This puts the company at odds with its proclamation that “our employees provide these products while working to protect the environment from which these products come.”

One can’t accuse the company of giving in to peer pressure on the issue of old-growth harvesting, however. While a growing number of its competitors and corporate brethren have agreed to stop using products derived from old-growth forests, Boise Cascade is stubbornly holding the line. And the list of companies saying no to old-growth is getting long and high-profile indeed. Not only have the nation’s two largest home improvement retailers, Home Depot and Lowe’s, agreed to stop selling old-growth and rainforest derived wood and paper products, so have two of the country’s biggest home builders, Centex Corp. and Kaufman & Broad Home Corp. In addition, a host of hi-tech firms have also joined the list including Microsoft, Intel, Texas Instruments, AT&T, 3Com, the E-Trade Group, and IKON Office Solutions.

Boise Cascade also gets black marks on its self-proclaimed green record for being a member of the Blue Ribbon Coalition (BRC), an organization which has been active and vocal in its opposition to a Forest Service proposal that would protect national forest land from logging and road building. In fact, Boise Cascade and the BRC, apparently taking the “think globally, act locally” philosophy to heart, have recently filed suit in the U.S. District Court of Boise, Idaho to overturn the Clinton Administration’s Road-less Initiative which protects nearly 60 million acres of American forests.

To contact Boise Cascade with questions or concerns, call (800) 521-3249 or visit its website at www.boisecascade.com.



3. Biotechnology Institute

The Biotechnology Institute, an advocacy group founded and funded by 11 biotech companies including Pfizer, Amgen and the Monsanto Fund, may have sunk to a new greenwashing low with the distribution of “Your World: Biotechnology and You,” a glossy, 16-page “educational” magazine aimed at elementary school students.

While promising to “help you unravel conflicting reports about agricultural biotechnology,” “Your World” gives its young readers a decidedly one-sided view of the many complex issues surrounding genetically engineered agriculture.

“GM plants may help increase food production so that we can produce the food we need without taking up more land,” states the magazine. And while higher crop yields would certainly be a potentially compelling argument for those concerned about the rapid destruction of open space, the GE crops now being cultivated do not, in fact, have significantly increased yields. In some cases, yields are actually lower than those for conventional varieties of the same crop. Monsanto, one of the funders of “Your World” should most certainly be familiar with this contradiction. In 1997 the company paid out substantial compensation to more than 50 growers of the firm’s genetically modified cotton who filed complaints with the US Seed Arbitration Council due to low yields and reduced quality.

And while “Your World” asserts that genetically modified crops can be cultivated with “fewer chemicals...than traditional crops,” this has so far not been the case. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) data from 1996 to 1998, shows that expanded plantings of genetically engineered “Roundup Ready” soybeans resulted in increased use of herbicides each year. Analysis of the same USDA data showed that soybean farmers use two to five times more herbicides (measured in pounds applied per acre) than those planting conventional soybean varieties, and 10 times more herbicides than farmers who practice so-called multitactic Integrated Weed Management.

Despite its questionable claims, the very last line of the magazine’s text tells its young readers: “You probably now understand more about these complex issues than most adults. Go and educate your elders!”

To contact the Biotechnology Institute with questions or concerns, call (800) 796-5806 or visit its website at [www. BiotechInstitute.org](http://www.BiotechInstitute.org).



4. Chevron

Now a standard-bearer, Chevron's "People Do" advertisements remain a textbook example of the black art of greenwashing.

Launched in 1985, at an annual cost of \$5 to \$10 million, the campaign consists of advertisements featuring ads publicizing a host of green projects ranging from “The Wetlands that Almost Disappeared,” in Louisiana, to a butterfly "preserve" at the infamous El Segundo refinery in California.

But while the Chevron website resolutely states that “projects to preserve endangered species and habitats are not token gestures – they are often extensive and costly,” the facts suggest otherwise. First and foremost, Chevron spends much more on promoting its image through these projects than it does on the actual projects. Producing a 30 second advertisement may cost \$200,000, while according to investigative journalist Joshua Karliner in his book *The Corporate Planet*, the El Segundo butterfly program costs the company only \$5,000 a year. Second, Chevron clearly implies that its People Do projects are initiated out of altruism and environmental consciousness, when in reality, a number of these projects are actually programs that are mandatory under the law. In essence, Chevron is patting itself on the back for abiding by the law.

According to EPA data, Chevron is linked to 49 Superfund sites, more than any other oil corporation. Since the 1970s, it has been fined millions of dollars for plant explosions, unsafe work environments, illegal air pollution, improper hazardous waste disposal and needlessly exposing minority neighborhoods to dangerous chemicals and waste. In March 1997, Chevron was hit with a \$1.2 million fine for operating off the California coast without required pollution prevention features. The fine was one of the largest to be levied on any oil company for failing to meet required standards since 1970 when Chevron was also fined for a similar offense.

Most disturbingly, however, Chevron’s People Do ads have proved one thing above all else – they work. Polls Chevron conducted in California two years after the start of "People Do" show that it was the oil corporation people trusted most to protect the environment. Among those who saw the commercials, Chevron sales increased by 10 percent, while among a target audience of those considered environmentally concerned, sales jumped by 22 percent.

Do people who operate environmentally irresponsible oil companies hide behind misleading advertising campaigns? Indeed, People Do.

To contact Chevron with questions or concerns, call (415) 894-7700 or visit its website at www.chevron.com.

5. Coca-Cola Company

Oh how Coca-Cola loves . Indeed, the company’s web site and numerous Coca-Cola spokespeople dazzle one with facts, endorsements and veritable paeans to the environmental righteousness of all things recyclable. As Coca-Cola is quick to tell you, it is a charter member of the “Buy Recycled Business Alliance”; it displays the “Please Recycle” symbol on all company containers; it outfitted company employees working at

the 1998 Winter Olympics in Nagano, Japan, with uniforms made from recycled soda bottles; and for the past four years, Coca-Cola has helped sponsor a national America Recycles Day on November 15th that urges Americans to pledge to buy recycled.

But while publicly positioning itself as a champion of recycling, Coke continues to oppose the single most successful soft drink container recycling program in the nation – the so called “bottle bill,” which requires soft drink bottlers and other beverage distributors to place a refundable deposit (usually 5 or 10 cents) on their containers. Ten states currently have such bottle bills and the majority of recycled beverage containers – nationally – come from those states.

According to Pat Franklin, executive director of the Arlington, Virginia-based Container Recycling Institute, which provides independent analysis of container and packaging policies, “Coca-Cola is misleading the public by claiming credit for high beverage container recycling rates. The highest recycling rates are all in ‘bottle bill’ states, where deposits create a financial incentive to recycle. Coke has fought bottle bills for 30 years, spending tens of millions of dollars, and continues to oppose these laws today.”

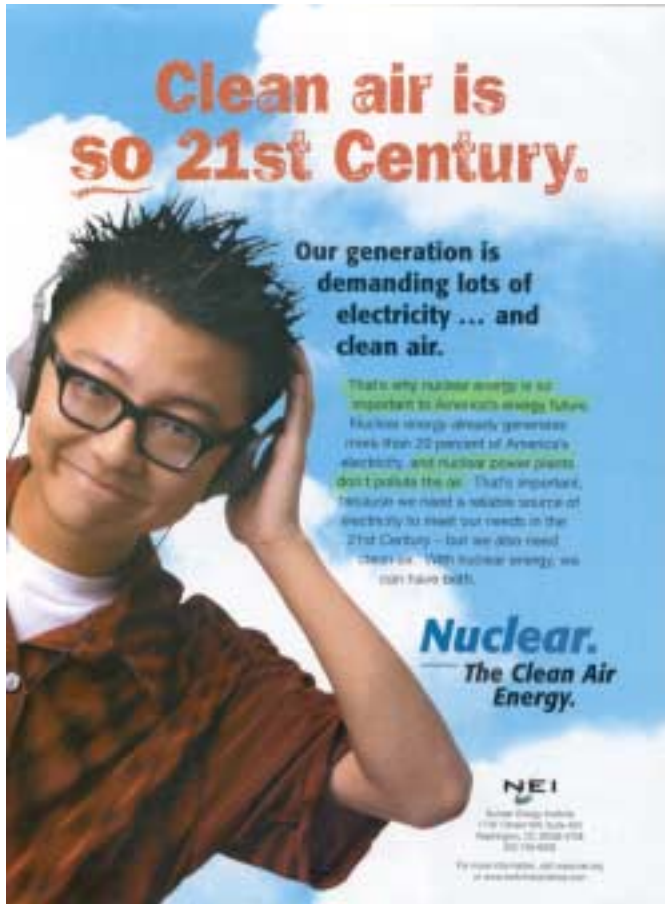
And what about recycled content in Coca-Cola’s beverage containers? Back in 1990, when the beverage industry was facing the threat of a legislatively mandated bottle bill, Coke announced a program to use recycled content in its plastic soda bottles. The company applied to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to approve a new bottle that would contain 25% recycled material. The FDA approved the technology that Coke still uses today to sell recycled plastic bottles abroad in Australia, New Zealand, Sweden and Switzerland. In fact, Coke’s CEO at the time stated that “more than half of all soft drink cans are recycled and we want to reach and exceed that level with plastic packaging.” The Company claimed that the new package met the company’s standards for consumer safety and environmental impact and that consumer acceptance of the recycled plastic bottles exceeded expectations. All good news, supporting a good business practice.

In 1994, however, Coke quietly dropped the program, most likely because the company was no longer threatened by national bottle bill legislation. Recycling rates for plastic soda bottles subsequently plummeted. In explaining its decision, Coke claimed the program was not “economically sustainable.” According to the April 1997 edition of *Plastics Recycling Update*, however, the price for recycled PET resin is only 6 cents per pound more than virgin plastic. Furthermore, both blending and layering plastic technology cost no more than two-tenths of a cent per bottle, compared to an approximate 20 cents per bottle profit. The bigger picture is that adding 25% recycled plastic would reduce profits by less than 0.5 percent. Those costs would also decrease even further as recycled PET becomes more abundant through increased corporate and consumer recycling.

On the Atlanta-based beverage giant’s website, Coca-Cola Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Douglas Daft assures customers and shareholders that in 2001

“leadership on managing diversity and protecting the environment will be key priorities.” Living up to its rhetoric on recycling would be a good start.

To contact Coca-Cola with questions or concerns, call (800) 438-2653 or visit its website at www.coca-cola.com.



6. Nuclear Energy Institute

“Clean air is so 21st Century,” chirps the text above the clean-cut, discman-wearing teenager smiling at us from the magazine advertisement. “Our generation is demanding lots of electricity...and clean air,” he informs us.

Aside from the fact that the rest of the world's non-teens presumably want the same thing, who can argue with his proclamation? After all, electricity and clean air are not only “so 21st Century,” they’re downright essential to modern living. But how in the world can we have both at the same time? Solar? Wind? Biomass? Nah. Nuclear Power – “the clean air energy,” – at least according to the Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI), a coalition funded by its 42 member American nuclear utility companies whose sole purpose is to promote nuclear energy.

But while wrapping itself in the environmentally-friendly label of the “clean air” energy, nuclear power is also the “greenhouse” energy and the highly toxic “radioactive waste” energy.

According to the nuclear industry’s own documents, about 10 metric tons of carbon, a leading greenhouse gas, are emitted annually to produce enough fuel for just one nuclear plant.

A similar claim by the nuclear industry was in fact contested in 1999 by a coalition of groups including the Better Business Bureau and the citizen watchdog group, Public Citizen, which filed complaints with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). Specifically, the contested ads asserted that nuclear plants are the largest energy source that produces no greenhouse gas emissions and therefore, help protect the environment.

The FTC did indeed conclude that the NEI is guilty of falsely implying that nuclear energy is “environmentally clean” and supplies electricity “without polluting.” However, the agency has not taken further action because its director feels the FTC may lack the jurisdiction needed to initiate a formal proceeding.

To contact Nuclear Energy Institute with questions or concerns, call (202) 739-8000 or visit its website at www.nei.org.



7. Weyerhaeuser

Question: When is clearcutting considered “the highest standard of ethical conduct and environmental responsibility”?

Answer: When you’re Weyerhaeuser, the world's largest private owner of timber, largest producer of lumber and a major importer of tropical wood.

Go to Weyerhaeuser’s web site and on the left side of its home page, under the heading “Weyerhaeuser In Action,” click on the section titled “In the Environment.” The very first thing you will see, in large bold lettering, is the following statement: “We hold ourselves to the highest standard of ethical conduct and environmental responsibility.”

While the company might consider it a matter of interpretation, most people do not consider the practice of clearcutting trees, which Weyerhaeuser has done to 4 million acres since 1990 alone, “the highest standard of ethical conduct and environmental responsibility.”

Another of Weyerhaeuser’s stated “Environmental Core Policies” is its “commitment to...aesthetic values.” While this again, may be somewhat of an interpretive area, anyone who has seen images of forest land that has been clearcut would be hard pressed to find the “aesthetic value” of such a visual.

And while Weyerhaeuser continues to boast in its television, radio and print ads that it replaces natural resources by planting 100 million seedlings “this year, like every year,” the company does not elaborate on how many of those seedlings make it to maturity, nor how many of those tree farms are replacing our disappearing old-growth forests – even though it must certainly have the statistical data.

To contact Weyerhaeuser with questions or concerns, call (253) 924-2345 or visit its website at www.weyerhaeuser.com.

8. DuPont

While there certainly is no agreed upon blueprint for saving the planet, DuPont seems to have come up with a unique strategy – the good old fashioned “To Do” list. Fair enough, it’s a big job and it’s hard to keep everything straight. But one thing’s for certain, when it comes to ideas for combating environmental degradation, DuPont has got to be the first to strike upon the idea of selling stuffed bears.

A standout among the company’s “To Do List” series, the stuffed bear advertisement is headed by the campaign’s faux hand written title: “To Do List For The Planet.” And sure enough, this item (number 34 among who knows how many) reads: “Help World Wildlife Fund Save the Polar Bears with Offer for Really Cute Stuffed Bears.” This innovative idea is followed by DuPont’s parenthetical note to itself, “Doing that now, with offer of plush bears – \$9.00 per set – plus shipping and handling. For every sale, \$1.00 goes to World Wildlife Fund.”

So if DuPont sells 50,000 of these irresistible Beanie Baby-esque items, it pockets \$400,000 and “the planet” gets 50 grand. Now there’s some truly green thinking.

And DuPont has even more of these cutting edge environmental ideas. In another of the company’s “To Do List For The Planet” ads, a real polar bear is shown sleeping on its stomach, with its cute-as-can-be cub dozing contently on its back. The “To Do List For The Planet” item in this ad? “Make Humans as Comfortable in the Arctic as Everyone Else,” followed by another of DuPont’s parenthetical notes to itself, “Did that with fibers so resistant to cold, they let people work, play and relax in subzero temperatures.” What does this have to with saving the planet you ask? Absolutely nothing. But farther down in the text of the ad the company does note that “nature deserves a lot of the credit,” because the man-made fiber was “inspired by polar bear fur.”

Aside from the truly tenuous relationship to environmental responsibility, DuPont’s attempt to associate itself with green-ness flies in the face of its environmental track record. As the world’s largest chemical company, DuPont is one of the country’s top emitter of toxins releasing nearly 1 million pounds per day, according to EPA data. DuPont also remains the world’s largest producer of ozone-depleting chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and continues to sell leaded gasoline overseas. DuPont’s record as a polluter has

even linked the company with harming public health in some instances. As the operator of the government's Savannah River nuclear weapons complex, it polluted water sources for almost 40 years and has been connected to elevated levels of leukemia and lung cancer among other diseases.

Perhaps the next item on DuPont's "To Do List For The Planet" should be to cease its transparent attempts to associate itself with environmental activism and undertake serious steps to stop poisoning our air and water.

To contact DuPont with questions or concerns, call (800) 441-7515 or visit its website at www.dupont.com.

9. American Plastics Council

You can't fault the American Plastics Council (APC) for touting the benefits of plastic beverage containers. After all, the Council is made up of made up of some twenty-six industry heavy hitters whose job it is to promote plastics. You can, however, fault the trade association for circulating misleading rhetoric.

One of the consistent themes in the APC's corporate communications such as the "What Plastics Did on Earth Day" section of its web site, is the assertion that "plastics leave a lighter footprint on the planet."

This statement, while certainly sounding eco-friendly, ignores the skyrocketing level of plastic containers in landfill, which among PET plastic bottle waste alone, increased by 210 percent between 1992 and 1998.

The APC's "lighter footprint" proclamation also sidesteps the serious environmental problems associated with polyvinylchloride (PVC), a common plastic which causes pollution at every stage.

Aside from generating toxic sludges and emissions, PVC production also perpetuates the widespread use of chlorine chemistry, which is the root cause of many of the most toxic synthetic chemicals. In addition, PVC products such as toys often contain additives, like lead, cadmium, and phthalates, which can be ingested by children.

As for disposal, incineration of PVC leads to highly hazardous dioxin emissions. And so-called recycling of PVC, as with other plastics, usually turns out to be sham recycling, downcycling, "resource recovery" (incineration) or export to Asia where the eventual fate of the plastic may or may not include some kind of recycling.

But don't expect the American Plastics Council to tell you. Several of the members of the American Plastics Council are also among the nation's worst polluters including GE Plastics (a division of General Electric), DuPont, Shell Chemical and its parent company Shell Oil, Ashland Chemical Company and Dow Chemical Company – which among them, operate 292 of the nation's Superfund-designated toxic dump sites. Many of

the American Plastics Council members are also on the Public Interest Research Group's list of Anti-Superfund PAC contributors to congressional campaigns from 1991-98.

To contact the American Plastics Council with questions or concerns, call (800) 2-HELP-90 or visit its website at www.plastics.org.

10. Royal Dutch Shell

You've got to hand it to Shell for the level of sophistication it brings to its greenwashing. In its recent series of ads and corporate communications, the multinational oil company seems to have decided that the best way of dealing with its less than stellar environmental record is to acknowledge the serious problems facing the Earth, but to remain neutral on the issues of severity and responsibility.

This is best exemplified by "Profits and Principles," a series of environmental image ads, a glossy booklet, and a section of the Shell website, all attempting to be "honest" – without being forthright.

In regard to climate change, Shell claims to support the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, but stops short of endorsing it on the grounds that it needs to be sure that the policies are "effective and efficient."

One notable ad in the company's "Profits and Principles," series shows a bulldozer wreaking havoc in what looks to be an unspoiled rainforest. Next to this depiction is a second visual of the same pristine location, sans the bulldozer. This bad versus good visual juxtaposition is correspondingly matched with text that poses the question "Exploit...or Explore?" Never mind that Shell has a sordid history of precisely such exploitation, most recently and egregiously in Nigeria, where the company has devastated the environment of the Niger delta, the fact that Shell is raising the question creates the impression that it is sensitive to the issue.

In another of the "Profits and Principles," series, Shell pose another seemingly self-aware question regarding solar and other alternative energy sources: "Wish Upon a Star...Or Make a Dream Come True?" This ostensibly esoteric riddle is supported by text that informs us of Shell's 5-year, \$500 million investment in solar, biomass and forestry as a means of demonstrating the company's "commitment to the development of renewables." And while \$100 million per year is certainly more than most companies have available, it's still just a tiny portion – less than 1% – of Shell's overall budget, and far less than their investments in oil and gas. Shell's self-fulfilling position is that it must keep searching for more fossil fuels because oil is still the cheapest and most convenient energy source – while at the same time making the dual assertion that "ignoring alternative energy is no alternative." Quite a shell game indeed.

To contact Royal Dutch Shell with questions or concerns, call (713) 241-6161 or visit its website at www.shell.com.

Tips for Consumers

The Federal Trade Commission, in cooperation with the Environmental Protection Agency, has developed guidelines for consumers to ensure that environmental marketing claims are not misleading. Earth Day 2000 encourages consumers to remember these helpful hints when making everyday purchases. Here are their tips to help you sort through environmental claims:

When you evaluate environmental claims in advertising and on product labels, look for specific information. Determine whether the claims apply to the product, the packaging, or both.

Recycled:

If a label says "recycled," check how much of the product or package is recycled. Unless the product or package contains 100 percent recycled materials, the label must specify how much is recycled.

Increasingly, labels on "recycled" products tell where the recycled material comes from. "Post-consumer" material comes from previously used business or consumer products, such as newspapers, shipping cartons, plastic bottles, glass containers, and aluminum cans. "Pre-consumer" material is basically manufacturing waste. For example, an envelope manufacturer might recycle the clippings left over when envelopes are cut from paper. These clippings could be made into other paper products instead of being thrown away.

"Recycled" products are made from items recovered or separated from the "waste stream" that are melted down or ground up into raw materials and then used to make new products. Or they may be products that are used, rebuilt, reconditioned, or remanufactured. If a product is labeled "recycled" because it contains used, rebuilt, reconditioned, or remanufactured parts, the label must say so - unless it's obvious to the consumer.

For example, a used auto parts store may sell used auto parts that have been salvaged from other cars and label them "recycled" without any description because it's plain that they are used parts. An office copier labeled "recycled" because it was rebuilt, reconditioned or remanufactured - and then labeled recycled - must state that the recycled content came from rebuilt, reconditioned or remanufactured parts. That's because it may not be obvious that it contains used parts.

Recyclable:

Recyclable claims on labels and advertising mean that the manufacturer or seller of the products has proof that the products can be collected and used again or made into useful products. Some companies simply may say "Please Recycle" on their products. Such

claims will be relevant to you only if these products are collected for recycling in your community, either through curbside pickup programs or drop-off programs. Contact your local recycling official for this information.

Some businesses recycle products for you. You may see a product labeled or advertised as "recyclable" and the business allows you to either return the used product to where it was purchased or send the used product to the manufacturer in a prepaid mailer. For example, some manufacturers of toner cartridges for computer printers allow consumers to return their empty cartridges to the dealer or mail them back to the manufacturer for reuse. Check to be sure that the recycling program accepts the exact kind of product or package you want to recycle before you place it in the bin.

Degradable:

Some products claim to be "degradable." "Biodegradable" materials, like food and leaves, break down and decompose into elements found in nature when they are exposed to air, moisture, and bacteria or other organisms. "Photodegradable" materials, usually plastics, disintegrate into smaller pieces when exposed to enough sunlight.

Either way, degradation of any material occurs very slowly in landfills, where most garbage is taken. This is because the law requires that modern landfills be designed to keep sunlight, air and moisture out of the landfill. This helps prevent pollutants from the garbage from entering the air and drinking water, but slows decomposition. Even materials like paper and food may take decades to decompose in a landfill.

Cleaning products, like detergents and shampoos, often display "biodegradable" claims. Most of these products degrade in wastewater systems, causing no harm to the environment.

In contrast to landfills, "composting" takes advantage of degradability. Composting turns degradable materials into useable compost - humus-like material that enriches the soil and returns nutrients to the earth. Some people compost yard trimmings and food scraps in their backyards. Many communities collect leaves, grass, and other yard trimmings for composting. When you see a "compostable" claim on a product or package, it means the manufacturer should have made sure the material can be safely composted at home. If you want to compost a product in a community facility, check that your community facility accepts the material for composting.

Eco-safe/Earth Smart:

Vague claims may sound warm and fuzzy, but generally offer little information of value. Claims that a product or service is "environmentally friendly," "environmentally safe," or "eco-safe" or labels that contain environmental seals - say, a picture of the globe with the words "Earth Smart" around it - are unhelpful for two reasons: First, all products, packaging and services have some environmental impact, although some may have

less than others. Second, these phrases alone do not provide the specific information you need to compare products, packaging, or services on their environmental merits. Look for claims that give some substance to the claim - the additional information explaining why the product is environmentally friendly or has earned a special seal.

Ozone-friendly:

Some products may claim that they are "CFC-free" or "ozone-friendly." But all ozone is not alike. The ozone layer in the upper atmosphere is necessary to prevent the sun's harmful radiation from reaching the earth. But when ozone develops at ground level, it forms smog, which can cause people to have serious breathing problems. If a company claims that its products are "ozone friendly" or "ozone safe," it should have reason to believe that the products do not harm the atmosphere - either the upper ozone layer or the air at the ground level.

Chlorofluorocarbons - CFCs - are chemical substances that can deplete the earth's protective ozone layer in the upper atmosphere. In 1978, CFCs were banned for use as propellants in nearly all consumer aerosol products. They are gradually being phased out in all products and manufacturing processes.

If a product doesn't contain any CFCs, it doesn't necessarily mean it is safe for the entire atmosphere. Substances called volatile organic compounds - VOCs - also contribute to the formation of ground-level ozone, or smog. Alcohols, butane, propane and isobutane are common VOCs. How common are these VOCs? Emissions from cars and factories are the major source of VOC releases to the environment, but household cleaning products, floor polishes, charcoal lighter fluid, windshield wiper fluid, and hair styling spray, gel or mousse, whether in aerosol cans or spray pumps, also may contain these substances and contribute to smog problems.

Reduced materials:

Some products and packages state that they use less material than former or competing products or packaging. To be meaningful, such claims should say exactly what's been reduced, by how much, and compared to what. For example, a claim like "20 percent less waste than our previous package" gives you more information than "20 percent less waste."

Symbols:

Certain symbols placed on consumer products tell you whether a product or package is recyclable (depending on your community program) or that the product or package is made from recycled materials.

Many products display this "universal" recycling symbol, often called the three-chasing-arrows symbol. Some companies use it to mean that the product or package is made of recycled materials; others use it to mean that the product or package is recyclable. Since

some communities don't accept for recycling every product or package that bears the symbol, it's a good idea to check with your local recycling or solid waste officials if you are unsure about appropriate disposal.

Manufacturers use this symbol, a code developed by the Society of the Plastics Industry, to indicate the type of plastic from which a particular product is made. SPI code numbers range from 1 to 7. Bottles or jugs labeled with numbers 1 and 2, such as soda bottles, detergent, shampoo, and milk jugs, are the most likely to be accepted for recycling. One caveat: Not all communities collect and recycle containers with the same codes, so it's a good idea to check with your recycling and solid waste officials for information on the codes that are accepted for recycling in your area.

To find out more information on consumers are doing to combat greenwashing, check out the Earth Day 2000 website at www.earth-day2000.org or call 877-EARTH-46.