

Forum

Student Opinion Matters

Save old-growth forests, not just trees

■ NATHAN FISHER

co-Editor-in-Chief

The "No-Print" day is supported by many people under the false idea that it will save trees. It isn't really trees that need saving, per se, but instead the focus should be on saving old-growth forests.

Today, most paper that you use comes from trees grown specifically for making paper. Makes sense right? We need trees, so we grow trees. These are grown on tree plantations. If these plantations are created on old agricultural land or other unforested land, they can actually be beneficial to the ecosystem. However, in practice they usually replace old-growth forests and disrupt their ecosystems. Because plantation forests are specialized for growing, they have very high yield and, therefore, can take up less space. This means that a smaller amount of land is required to produce the same amount of wood as a natural forest.

I believe that saving individual trees is unimportant. We have more trees today than we did 80 years ago due to the reforestation that has taken place since the big days of the great timber baron era of deforestation. But we also have fewer healthy forests. The trees' age diversity is important to a healthy, balanced forest ecosystem. We need to stop eliminating old-growth forests and instead utilize already cleared land for tree

plantations.

Also of note, is the drain of public money caused by recycling paper and other materials. The impact on the environment of the many industrial processes that recycled materials go through and the pollution of all of the vehicles used to transport "recyclable" material end up negating much of the positive environmental benefits. Recycling requires public garbage collection to double its fleet of trucks to provide both services, which means double the amount of fossil fuel used by these trucks. Recycling would probably work best as a replacement, but as it stands, it just sucks up public money. In fact, in some cases it is as much as twice as expensive to recycle one ton of material instead of just throwing it away.

If recycling was beneficial, it wouldn't need to be subsidized. It would support itself. But recycling many commonly recycled materials costs more than producing them from virgin sources, not all though. Aluminum and some forms of paper, like newsprint (but not your common white office paper like our school uses) actually are beneficial to recycle. My point here being that not everything is **financially** beneficial to recycle all the time every time; it is more complex than that and we need to recognize that and recycle accordingly.



Photo by Cole Fiala

Much of the recycled material that is produced today is inferior in quality when compared to its virgin counterpart. For instance, recycled plastics are unprofitable and require public money to function. Eventually it will become economically viable to recycle expended resources, but until we start running out of original sources, recycling will not be economically

time and energy into using or developing alternative materials to paper, like hemp, and to petroleum based plastics, deriving them from non-petroleum sources. We should also focus on growing a limited number of tree plantations in areas where their yields, compared with required space, are optimal and where they will impact the environment the least.

We will always need

viable and will continue to drain the wallets of taxpayers.

Instead of focusing on recycling everything we should focus on pre-cycling and using products that are made from renewable sources.

We should put more

paper, and we need to find a way to make that paper in the least harmful way. So use less paper to save the school money, or use less paper to reduce the demand for tree plantations, thereby saving old-growth forests, but don't use less paper just to save the trees; they're here to stay. We need them and they need us.

I recommend to anyone surprised by any of the information in this article to perform their own research. I, myself, did not really question recycling and just accepted its benefits as most people do, but then I saw the libertarian view of Penn & Teller's: Bullsh!! episode on recycling which motivated me to look deeper. One good place to start for yourself might be Wikipedia's article on recycling criticism which cites many of the sources I have taken information from for this article. The real point here though, is to be analytical when it comes to any kind of information and not just accept anything you hear as truth because it feels good.

White House conceals global warming

■ MEGAN BUTTS

Staff Reporter

There have been documents obtained proving that White House officials have edited and removed their own government scientists' research concerning global warming. I can't think of any reason that scientific information regarding global warming should be kept a secret.

In Antarctica, scientists can measure the amount of carbon dioxide (CO₂) that was in the atmosphere from the ice for over the past 650,000 years. This is huge because they can look at cyclical nature and big changes in temperature and CO₂. They have translated this information into charts that show where the ice ages and earth warming have been. The levels of CO₂ corresponds with the temperature; the more CO₂, the higher the temperature.

Over the past 650,000 years CO₂ levels have never been more than 300 parts per million. That is, until now. CO₂ levels are far above the natural cycle, and higher than have ever been (recorded) according to many sources which includes Al Gore's movie "An Inconvenient Truth."

The ten hottest years ever recorded have occurred in the past 14 years. The hottest year was 2005. There have been heat waves all over the world, killing many people. Oceans have been warming leading to an increase in wind velocity and moisture content, causing more intense hurricanes.

Ice caps are melting at a continually increasing rate. Within the next 50 years, the sea level will raise 20 feet, wiping out millions of peoples' homes all over the world. This is the first time in history that polar bears are drowning—because they can't find ice. There have been changes in many ecosystems, destroying many species' populations while there is a rise in potential disease bearing pests.

Think about how much money the auto parts, oil coal industries...etc. would lose if we took action against global warming. Both President George Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney are former oil executives. They are linked to oil companies and make a lot of money from oil production. If oil use is reduced, they would lose money. It is pretty sad when people are so greedy they are willing to destroy the earth

over it.

People need to recognize global warming is serious, and that our president along with the administration, is trying to hide the facts from us because it directly affects their income. Well, how useful will their money be when there is no planet left?

The U.S. is one of two countries that has not signed the Kyoto Treaty which limits greenhouse gas emissions; Australia is the other. We are not getting necessary political support. We need to campaign and vote for candidates who recognize global warming as an important issue.

There is so much that individuals can do: replace regular light bulbs with compact fluorescent lights, choose cars with more efficient gas mileage, drive less, turn off electronic devices when not in use, use less hot water, recycle, plant a tree, and more.. And, most importantly, raise your voice by educating your peers, getting involved in a club or environmental organization, writing letters to politicians, and campaigning and/or voting for issues and candidates that support coming up with solutions to global warming.

Amplifier

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