

Pale Green Eugene

A forest activist leaves his chosen city

I left town at the end of May for the East Coast – family issues, mainly – and, yes, I already miss Eugene. During my seven years as a resident, I did what I could to try to bring positive change to the city and region. I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who's helping to move Eugene closer to a model of what we need to see in the world.



Listed below are seven (I had to pick a number) obstacles that must be surmounted for Eugene to ever achieve anything resembling "sustainability." Luckily, Eugene is blessed with many concerned citizens who I'm sure are more than up to the task.

7. **Mainstream counterculture.** Before I came to Eugene, I had the silly belief that being a "hippie" was more about your actions and what's in your heart than your wardrobe or hairstyle. Example: When a local hippie-chic boutique, making money off leftist bumper stickers, refuses to carry a T-shirt supporting local civil rights abuse victim Ian Van Ornum, one can't help but feel that Eugene's "counterculture" has sold out.

6. **Bike psych.** Every unsupported pro-bicycle bill, every group bike ride harassed by police, every unprosecuted reckless driver, makes it that much harder to get Eugeneans out of their cars and onto their bikes.

5. **Pollentown, U.S.A.** Lane and Linn County allergy sufferers are forced to inhale some of the highest (pesticide-laden!) pollen counts in the world, largely because of the grass seed industry's stranglehold on hundreds of thousands of acres of fertile cropland – land that could instead feed the Willamette Valley.

4. **Poison on people.** It's nothing short of a human rights violation to deliberately expose a person to a substance – any substance – without their consent. Whether it's for moths in south Eugene or weeds in Coast Range clearcuts, the aerial application of pesticides (with accompanying drift) is an act of eco-terrorism.

3. **Rogue EPD.** I know for a fact that the EPD has some good cops. Unfortunately, the number of officers demonstrating poor judgment, lack of restraint and unethical behavior inevitably gives the whole force a bad name. Add to this a police association fighting (already weak) oversight every step of the way, and trusting the EPD becomes a hard sell indeed.

2. **Stuffed suits (Oregon and beyond).** Any politician more interested in getting reelected than taking actual measures to address the unprecedented triple crisis of peak oil, resource depletion and climate change will undoubtedly hold a special place in the history books as a traitor to the human race.

1. **Greenwash.** Burning forests for electricity and/or liquid fuels can never be "green." Expanding highways and building new stadiums is not "sustainable." Token gestures and empty promises are not "progressive." No one denies that to live day-to-day, humans must take something from nature. But if we're going to balance the survival "budget" on planet Earth, we've got to give back as much as we take (at least!). Unless we're honest about when we're giving and when we're taking, ecological "bankruptcy" – a.k.a. collapse – is just a matter of time.

Good luck, Eugene! You're going to need it! We're all going to need it ...

Josh Schlossberg is a volunteer co-director of Eco Advocates (eco-advocates.org) with Shannon Wilson and Samantha Chirillo. He promises you haven't heard the last of him.

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