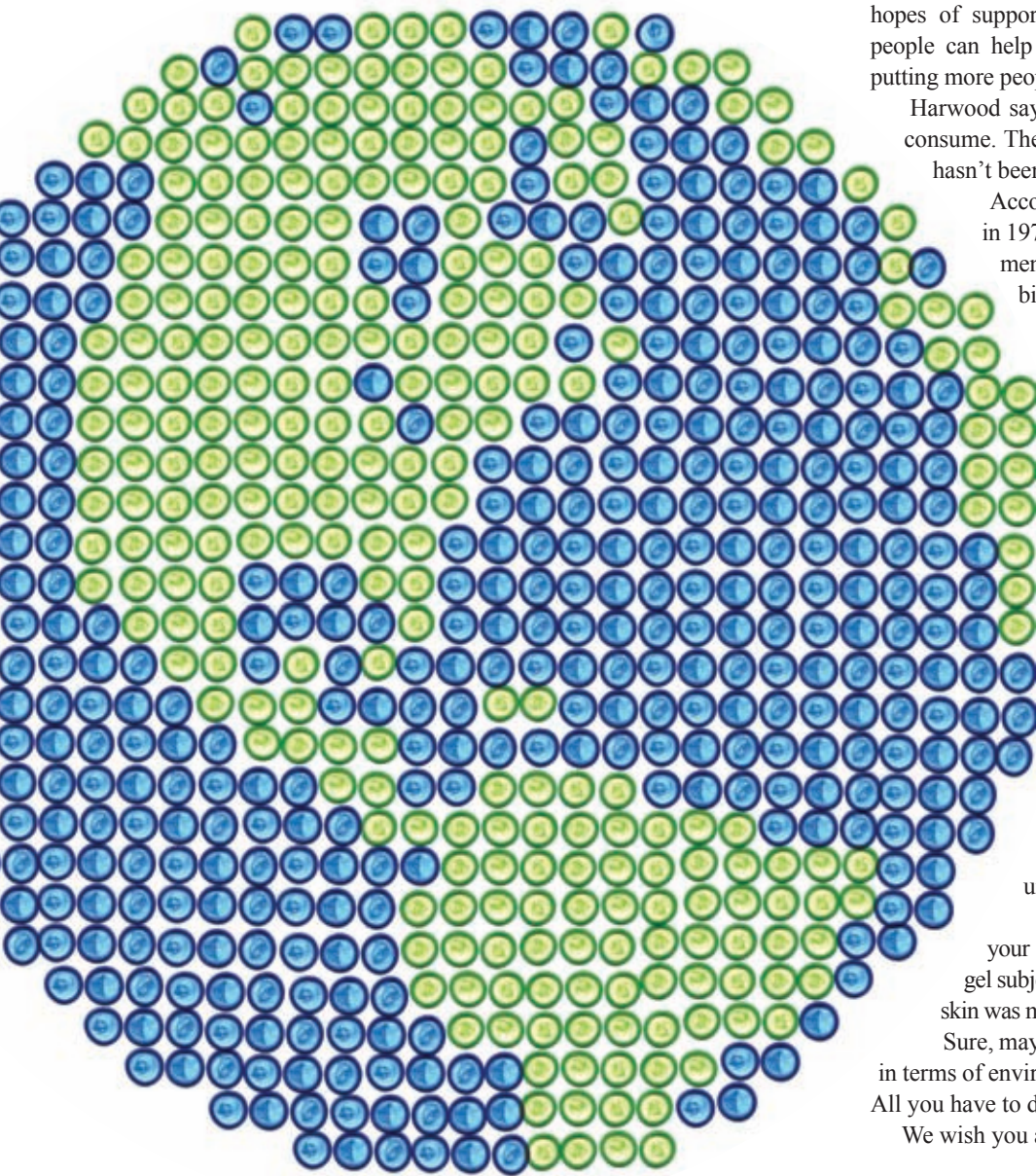


DO IT FOR THE PLANET

How safer sex can save the Earth

BY DANTE ZUÑIGA-WEST



Here's the deal: If we don't have this little "birds and bees" conversation, there won't be too many birds or bees left. The planet we live on is threatened by a species of animal whose way of life destructively encroaches upon the habitats and prosperity of other creatures — we are that species, and we just keep coming.

"Wrap with care, save a polar bear" and "In the sack, save a leatherback" are just two of the environmentally savvy messages printed on the Center for Biological Diversity's (CBD) latest series of endangered species condoms, set to be distributed on Earth Day. Wondering what biological diversity has to do with sheathing your love stick? That's exactly the question CBD hopes to spark with this new line of jimmy hats.

"We got to a point in our work where we realized there was one link between the (environmental) issues we are seeing today, and that's overpopulation" explains Amy Harwood, human overpopulation organizer at CBD, who says the endangered species condoms are a form of direct action.

"We're hoping that these condoms go out into the community and help start conversations about population growth," Harwood says, "they're great tools for that."

On the condom packaging, the artwork of Portland's Roger Peet colorfully depicts endangered animals such as Florida panthers, spotted owls and hellbender salamanders alongside catchy conservation slogans, in hopes of supporting one of the best ways people can help save the planet — by not putting more people on it.



Harwood says the main problem presented by human overpopulation is the amount of resources we consume. The more of us there are, the more we need to survive. "And the world's human population hasn't been growing slowly, it's exploded," she says.

According to the CBD, the Earth's population has nearly doubled since the inaugural Earth Day in 1970. The group says that overpopulation and overconsumption are the root causes of environmental destruction, and that human overpopulation has led to the extinction of the woodland bison of West Virginia, Arizona's Merriam's elk and the Rocky Mountain grasshopper.

Though Harwood and company feel compelled to address overpopulation through birth control, they aren't advocating that people cease reproducing; rather, they want folks to have the resources and information needed to make responsible decisions.

"I have friends who know I'm passionate about this stuff and call to apologize to me when they get pregnant, and it's not like that," Harwood says, going on to point out that having a kid is everyone's right, but half of the pregnancies in the U.S. are unintended. "I would hope that it (having a kid) would be a well-thought-out decision, not something to be discussed after someone gets pregnant," she says. "That's what I hope the condoms can help with."

And hey, while we're on the topic of safe sex for planetary improvement, it's important to note that there are other options out there that won't have you all wrapped in rubber (or all-natural latex). One in particular that may be coming soon — provided that the clinical trials and approval processes get under way as they have in India — is quite unique.

Gentlemen, let's say you're all about saving the Earth as a responsible birth-control user whose only interest is keeping your offspring output at zero. You're not a fan of condoms, are in a committed relationship and not stoked on getting a vasectomy? You should check out the shredder, otherwise known as RISUG (reversible inhibition of sperm under guidance).

This 15-minute procedure (done under very localized anesthesia) involves a doctor injecting your vas deferens with a polymer gel that rips your sperm apart while they're on the way out. The gel subjects your little swimmers to intense reverse polarity that is likened to what would happen if your skin was made of metal and you were trying to get through a hallway with a magnetized floor and ceiling.

Sure, maybe you think that chemically puréeing your baby batter is further than you are willing to go in terms of environmental conservation, but hey, before you knock it, consider this — RISUG is reversible. All you have to do is flush your gear out with a baking soda solution.

We wish you a happy Earth Day (now please breed responsibly).

ew

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