

goods are limited. Unfortunately, groups that share real-world resources are usually large, often communicate poorly and don't realize the resource crisis they face. In a 1994 study that simulated ocean fishing in groups of up to 200 in size, I found that participants would cut back their fishing when they learned that the fish stocks were depleting. But the cutbacks they made were too little to save the fish population over the long run. People were destroying a resource just as they believed they were helping it; not unlike those who flew to protest the WTO or who travel to far-off national parks to revel in nature.

To reverse this ill-fated trend, you can construct your life to make conservation easy. For example, the next time you move, place environmental considerations near the top of your list by relocating as close as possible to work or school. Then you won't drive as much, and won't have to ride a bike or walk too far, either. Residing in a slightly smaller home would consume less energy for heating or cooling without forcing you to sacrifice much comfort. Do you need to fly as much as you do? Perhaps there are undiscovered vacation spots close to home. And instead of flying to your next business meeting simply because your company will pay for it, try carpooling or taking a train, or telecommuting via phone, fax or the Internet.

Adopting these measures would significantly reduce pollution and global warming and its ill-effects on our well-being. Celebrate this April 22, Earth Day, by making a few of these changes. The world depends on it.

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## File 2.

### Enviro-Myths You Can Stop Believing

ANN ARBOR, Michigan — We recently participated in an environmental festival at the Mall of America in Bloomington, Minnesota, the largest indoor shopping center in America. After speaking with thousands of parents, children and teachers, we were appalled at the public's wealth of environmental misunderstanding. Here are some examples.

*One: Recycling is the key.*

Actually, recycling is one of the least important things we can do, if our real objective is to conserve resources.

Remember the phrase "reduce, reuse and recycle"? Reduce comes first for a good reason: It's better not to create waste than to have to figure out what to do with it. And recycling, like any other form of manufacturing, uses energy and other resources while creating pollution and greenhouse gases.

Rather, we need to make products more durable, lighter, more energy efficient and easier to repair rather than to replace. Finally, we need to reduce and reuse packaging.

*Two: Garbage will overwhelm us.*

The original garbage crisis occurred when people first settled down to farm and could no longer leave their campsites after their garbage grew too deep. Since then, every society has had to figure out what to do with discards. That something was usually unhealthy and ugly — throwing garbage in the streets, piling it up just outside of town, incorporating it into structures or simply setting it on fire. Today we can design history's and the world's safest recycling facilities, landfills and incinerators.

The problem is political. No one wants to spend money on just getting rid of garbage or to have a garbage site in the backyard. The obvious solution is to stop generating so much garbage in the first place. Doing so requires both the knowledge and the self-discipline to conserve energy and do more with less stuff.

*Three: Industry is to blame.*

No, it's all people's fault. Certainly industry has played a significant role in destroying habitats, generating pollution and depleting resources. But we are the ones who signal to businesses that what they are doing is acceptable — every time we open our wallets.

And don't just blame industrial societies. In his recent book "Earth Politics," Ernst Ulrich von Weizsacker wrote that "perhaps 90 percent of the extinction of species, soil erosion, forest and wilderness destruction and also desertification are taking place in developing countries". Thus, even non-industrialized, subsistence economies are creating environmental havoc.

*Four: The earth is in peril.* Frankly, the earth doesn't need to be saved. Nature doesn't give a hoot if human beings are here or not. The planet has survived cataclysmic changes for millions upon millions of years. Over that time, it is widely believed, 99 percent of all species have come and gone while the planet has remained.

Saving the environment is really about saving our environment — making it safe for ourselves, our children and the world as we know it. If more people saw the issue as one of saving themselves, we would probably see increased motivation and commitment to actually doing so.

*/based on the article "Six Enviro-Myths You Can Stop Believing" by Robert M. Lillienfeld and William L. Rathje, the New York Times, May 1996/*