

## **Celebrating Earth Day: What Can We Do To Help Save Our Planet?**

by Sandya Das

### **What is Earth Day?**

Earth Day began as a reminder that human existence is intricately connected to the Earth's condition. Many Americans celebrate Earth Day on April 22nd to honor the environment and assess the mounting challenges to protect our planet and natural resources from deterioration. U.S. Senator Gaylord Nelson founded Earth Day in 1970 to encourage Americans to advocate for U.S. policies protecting human health and the environment. In recent years, Earth Day has served to raise Americans' awareness on how to protect the environment in their daily activities and long-term goals.

### **What are the Global Environmental Challenges?**

While we are reaping the benefits of rapid industrial progress and technology, we are also witnessing the effects of our economic growth on the environment. Today, the most pressing environmental challenge is climate change. The climate change crisis stems from carbon dioxide and other gases warming the surface of the planet naturally by trapping solar heat in the atmosphere. These gases keep the Earth habitable. However, many countries burn "greenhouse gases," or high carbon-emitting fossil fuels, such as gas, oil and coal to produce energy. The excessive use of fossil fuels has drastically increased the amount

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An aerial view of thousands of climate change activists gathered in New York's Central Park on September 30, 2009, to form a human sculpture – the shape of the earth trapped inside an hourglass. The event, organized by Oxfam as a part of the "tckctck" campaign, came two days before President Obama and other heads of state met at the UN to discuss climate change. (AP Photo/Afton Almaraz)

### **The American Center**

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Office Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Monday through Friday)

### **H O L I D A Y S**

April 2: Good Friday

## A WORD FROM THE CENTER

Dear Readers,

One of my favorite and oldest T-shirts is from a 1990 Earth Day celebration in my hometown of Santa Barbara. At the time, I didn't realize that Earth Day was celebrating its 20th anniversary and here we are 20 years later on the eve of the 40th anniversary. Nor did I appreciate the symbolism of the location. It was at our community college overlooking the ocean that was the scene of a large oil spill in 1969. The outrage that resulted after the spill helped to galvanize the environmental movement, leading to the establishment of Earth Day in 1970.

Santa Barbara's Earth Day theme this year is *Bringing it Home* and the organizers hope to highlight the importance of sustainability in private homes as well as our global "home" – our bioregion, state, country, and planet – dovetailing nicely with the community initiative *Fossil Free by '33*. Another fantastic example of not just thinking globally, but acting globally. Events such as these, which are replicated in thousands of communities across the United States and the world, help to inform members about the community, about important environmental issues, as well as aid in bringing the community together. The serious environmental issues we face can only be addressed with support from all; they are global problems that require global leadership.

Closer to home here in Mumbai, I hope many of you will be able to come to the Center on April 20 and 23 to watch some or all of the documentaries in our Earth Day Documentary Film Festival. A helpful reminder to all of us that everyday is Earth Day – reduce, reuse, recycle and spread the message to all!



Christine Dal Bello  
Public Diplomacy Officer

*(Continued from page 1)*

of carbon dioxide in the Earth's atmosphere and has caused the temperature to rise. The effects are devastating on the environment and to human lives. Our most beloved natural landmarks are changing beneath our eyes, as glaciers are melting, plants and animals are being forced from their habitats and becoming extinct, and severe storms and droughts are increasing. Burning fossil fuels also cause adverse health effects as they increase the amount of air and water pollution. In the U.S., recent studies suggest that pollution causes more deaths from respiratory illness than drunk driving and homicide deaths combined. There is no doubt humans are playing a hand in influencing climate change with our production of greenhouse gases. Thus, it is crucial to solve the problem and mitigate the impact of global warming.

### What Can We Do to help?

Despite recent roadblocks in global agreements, the U.S.

commitment to addressing climate change and mitigating its impact is strong. Through legislation, the U.S. Congress passed the Clean Air Act of 1972 and established the Environmental Protection Agency to ensure U.S. policy protects human health and the environment. The U.S. continues to play an active role in the international arena, participating in global environmental summits from Bali, to most recently, Copenhagen. The U.S. seeks to come to a consensus with the international community by engaging constructively on an agreed outcome for environmental protection and economic sustainability.

Ideally, we hope to come to a global agreement quickly on climate change. Until then, there are ways individuals can make a difference now. U.S. based nongovernmental organizations such as the Sierra Club, National Wildlife Federation, and Environmental Defense Fund provide outlets for the public to advocate environmental issues, such as the efficient use of natural resources, alternative clean energy resources, and stewardship to the environment through changes in public policy and individual behavior.

Small changes in individuals' daily routines can also make a great impact in stopping global warming from harming our planet. Day-to-day activities such as recycling can save 2400 pounds of carbon dioxide per year, replacing light bulbs with compact fluorescent light bulbs can save 150 pounds per year, and carpooling can save one pound of carbon dioxide for every mile one doesn't drive. As Earth Day approaches this year, people around the world should consider making a commitment to a new way of impacting their local community and greater global society.

*Sandya Das works at the U.S. Consulate General, Mumbai*

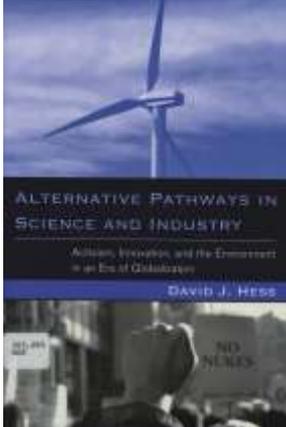


Employees of Jones Soda Co. ride bicycles to power computers and other office equipment, April 22, 2009, at the company's headquarters in Seattle. To mark Earth Day, the company reduced its electrical needs for the day so that about ten riders on bikes attached to generators can provide power all day for the beverage-maker's operations. (AP Photo/Ted S. Warren)

## NOTES FROM THE AMERICAN LIBRARY

### Select Resources Available on Environmental Issues

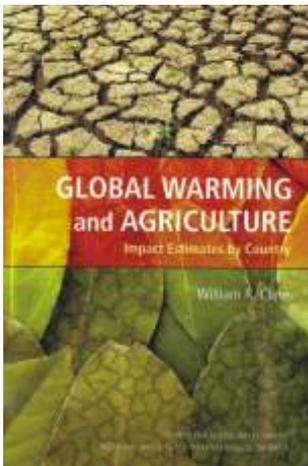
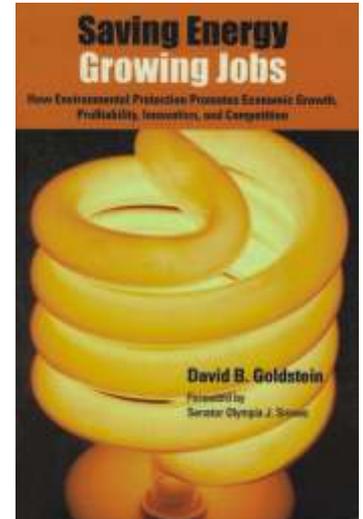
***Alternative Pathways in Science and Industry: Activism, Innovation, and the Environment in an Era of Globalization***  
by David J. Hess  
The MIT Press, 2007



In this book, the author examines how social movements and other forms of activism affect innovation in science, technology, and industry. Synthesizing and extending work in social studies of science and technology, social movements, and globalization, Hess explores the interaction of grass-roots environmental action and mainstream industry, and offers a conceptual framework for understanding it.

***Saving Energy Growing Jobs: How Environmental Protection Promotes Economic Growth, Profitability, Innovation, and Competition***  
by David B. Goldstein  
Bay Tree Publishing, 2007

This three-part book demonstrates how environmental protection can lead to business opportunities and economic growth. Part one focuses on energy efficiency and the economy, part two on environmental protection and economic barriers, and part three focuses on the politics of environmentalism.

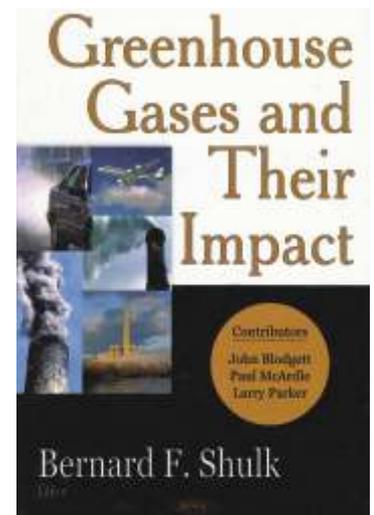


***Global Warming and Agriculture: Impact Estimates by Country***  
by William R. Cline  
Center for Global Development and the Peterson Institute  
for International Economics, 2007

This book presents a study of the impact of global warming on agriculture both globally, and on a country-by-country basis. Beginning by surveying the literature and types of previous estimates, Cline addresses three key issues that may impact these estimates: carbon fertilization, irrigation, and international trade. The study includes country-level climate projections and agriculture impact estimates.

***Greenhouse Gases and Their Impact***  
Edited by Bernard F. Shulk  
Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2007

This book examines current challenges in attempting to reduce the consumption of fossil fuels as well as developing alternative methods to produce energy. Included also are reports on the status of greenhouse gas emissions, trends and projections, and also market-based strategies to reduce greenhouse gases.



Ask a Librarian: Please write to the American Library at [libref@state.gov](mailto:libref@state.gov) for research queries related to information on U.S. international relations, education, law and legislation, English language, and literature.

**Latino Flavor in the United States  
Discussion led by Susan Quintana**

**Monday, April 19  
American Center Auditorium**

**6:00 p.m.**

Come celebrate Latino colors with Susan Quintana. With music and dance, you will be transported to areas of the United States greatly influenced by Latin-American culture.

**Susan Quintana** grew up in a Mexican-American household close to the United States-Mexico border. She majored in Economics at the University of Texas and mastered in Economic Development and Security Studies at St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas. She speaks Spanish, Hebrew, and some Arabic. She enjoys cooking and assisting her mother in administering an NGO in Texas. She is an amateur percussionist by training and has done freelance performances in the past. She is enthusiastic about illustrating U.S. diversity.

**American Center Auditorium  
3:30 and 6:30 p.m.**

**Friday, April 16**

**The Day After Tomorrow  
(2004, 123 mins)**

Written and directed by Roland Emmerich (*Independence Day*), this enthralling man vs. nature thriller stars Dennis Quaid as a scientist whose prediction of an impending second ice age becomes a devastating reality. As the entire population heads south to warmer climates, Quaid must make a desperate trek to New York City to rescue son Jake Gyllenhaal, braving earthquakes, hurricanes, and tidal waves along the way. Sela Ward, Emmy Rossum, Dash Mihok, and Ian Holm costar.



**Earth Day Documentary Film Series**

In celebration of Earth Day, the American Center will screen environment and nature-themed documentary films from the American Documentaries Showcase series in the American Center Auditorium on April 20 and 23. All events are free and open to the public on a first-come, first-served basis.



**Flow: For The Love Of Water** (2008, 84 mins)

**April 20, 4:00 p.m.**

Irena Salina's award-winning documentary investigates what experts label the most important political and environmental issue of the 21st century – the world water crisis – that builds a case against the growing privatization of the world's dwindling fresh water supply with a focus on politics, pollution, human rights, and the emergence of a domineering world water cartel.



**A Man Named Pearl** (2008, 78 mins)

**April 20, 6:00 p.m.**

A bigoted remark made in 1976 dissuades Pearl Fryar from moving into a white neighborhood. Told that "Black people don't keep up their yards." Pearl creates an extraordinary topiary garden, which receives over 5000 visitors a year.



**The Garden** (2008, 80 mins)

**April 23, 4:00 p.m.**

The film follows the plight of mostly immigrant farmers from the tilled soil of the United States' largest urban farm to Los Angeles City Hall, telling the story of back room deals, land developers, green politics, poverty, power and racial discord as the farmers organize and speak out while bulldozers are poised to level their 14-acre oasis.



**Red Gold** (2008, 55 mins)

**April 23, 5:45 p.m.**

A film about the proposed pebble mine told through the unique and disparate voices of commercial, subsistence and sport-fishermen of Bristol Bay, Alaska, that documents the tension between mine officials – who say they will build a "clean" mine that will leave the salmon's habitat untouched – and local fishermen who oppose the project.



**America's Lost Landscape: The Tall Grass Prairie** (2005, 58 mins)

**April 23, 7:00 p.m.**

Tells the story of how and why the prairie was changed by Euro-American settlements. The film highlights prairie preservation efforts and explores how the tall grass prairie ecosystem may serve as a model for sustainable agriculture in the future.

Edited and designed by  
**Robyn Remeika and Rizwana Sayed**

Copy edited by **Eva Doctor**

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St. John Road, Bandra (W), Mumbai 400 050

Admission to all American Center programs, restricted to persons over 16, will be on a first-come, first-served basis. The auditorium doors will open 30 minutes before the start of the program.