

## **Preserving the planet is job for us all**

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As humans, we are inescapably products of nature, from the time of conception until our deaths, and ultimately, our return to nature. The recognition of this fact is a first step in understanding ourselves. An important second step is to become more accepting of living within the limits of nature. Third, nature sustains us. We cannot live without it, but nature can exist without us, as it has for millions of years prior to the dawn of human life. During eons of pre-human existence, our planet was forming deposits of coal, natural gas, oil, gold, diamonds and other valuable minerals. Nature formed rich top soil which sustains flora and fauna. Ocean life developed early in the earth's pre-historic times, and from this sprung the resources which presently enable many life forms to survive.

With modern technology, it is now possible that we can damage and threaten earth. The harm or the good that we do to nature determines how nature shapes our lives and provides for our needs. Humans have been slow in recognizing that the resources of nature are vast, but not inexhaustible.

For generations, people believed that erratic weather, periods of drought and floods, depletion of fish stocks, and increasing desert areas were simply unfortunate events that happened to us as though they were truly "acts of God". However, with developments in science, we now know that each of these events is a natural response exacerbated by human actions or inactions.

We need to look at global problems in a broader sense. Consider, for example, the present problems of war, over-population, poverty, starvation, disease, shortages of natural resources, and climate change. According to many scientists these problems are caused by humans and will, in the end, have to be solved by human solutions. As we come to understand nature, we find things that occur in nature are more predictable than we had previously thought.

Nature contains vast resources that we require in order to survive. Fresh water, clean air, minerals, food, and energy resources such as coal, gasoline, and oil are important parts of nature's global storehouse. As our world population increases, we threaten nature's resources through contamination and depletion. Human needs for energy resources continually increase. Combined efforts are required to preserve nature and the more young people are educated about the limitations of nature, the more responsible they will become as future keepers of natural resources. While most formal education occurs in schools, much is also handed down through parents, community values, public media, and responsible business practices.

With input from scientists, businesses can promote ecologically sound methods of conserving what we already have while searching for new sources of clean energy consistent with a healthy environment. Energy efficient automobiles, better disposal of wastes, scientific advancements in health care, combined with the best scientific knowledge, can preserve and protect our natural resources. Politicians have an important role to play in overseeing nature's wealth and the state

of its health. It is important to select politicians who are truly leaders, people who will think globally and who will serve as gate-keepers for the conservation of our natural resources.

The air we breathe and the water we drink is so much a part of nature that it is easy to take these aspects of nature for granted. Without clean air and water, or without healthy food, our lives will be considerably debased and shortened.

We can't all be scientists, but ordinary citizens can make huge contributions in arriving at solutions to environmental problems. In a very real sense, we are all in this together. No one industry, country, or leader alone can provide all the solutions needed to keep nature healthy. We are as much a part of nature as are the rocks, trees, and animals that share this planet. Sharing is a key concept in this matter. We have the responsibility of keeping nature as healthy as possible. We inhabit this planet with our children and future generations. We share an ethical responsibility to leave this earth as healthy as we found it when we were children ourselves.