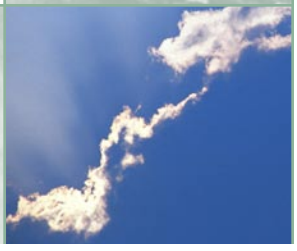



Top 10 Environmental Myths





THE SPIRIT OF ENTERPRISE
U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

U.S. Chamber of Commerce
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Myth 1: Forests are in rapid decline.

Fact: Forest acreage is increasing.

United Nations data show that forest acreage has *increased* through time, and there is no indication that this trend will cease in the long term.[1] Today, U.S. forest tree growth exceeds tree cutting by 37 percent. In 1920, U.S. forests covered 732 million acres; today they cover 737 million acres, despite a U.S. population increase from 106 million to 272 million in the same time period. Similarly, European forests expanded from 361 million acres in 1950 to 482 million acres in 1990, and despite deforestation in tropical countries, 76 percent of the tropical rain forest zone is still covered with forest.[2]

Myth 2: Air quality is getting worse.

Fact: Air quality is getting significantly better.

Aggregate air emissions—everything rolled into one—have declined 25 percent since 1970, while our gross domestic product has increased 161 percent in the same period.[3] Between 1988 and 1997, the total number of "unhealthy" air quality days decreased an average of 66 percent for major cities across the United States, and according to the EPA, air pollutant emissions have dramatically decreased, specifically: lead is down 97 percent; sulfur oxides are down 67 percent; carbon monoxide is down 66 percent; nitrogen oxides are down 38 percent; and ozone is down 31 percent. Air pollutants from cars have decreased by more than 90 percent—it now takes 20 new cars to produce the same emissions as one car produced in the 1960s and that figure is improving with the onset of new technologies.

Myth 3: The Kyoto Protocol will successfully reduce levels of CO_2 in the atmosphere.

Fact: Even if the Kyoto Protocol was ratified and implemented, CO_2 would continue to increase.

Although parties to the Kyoto Protocol agreed to what greenhouse gas cuts they already believed they could accomplish, many have failed to achieve even these agreed upon minimal reductions. Moreover, developing countries such as China and India, which are large (and growing) emitters of CO_2, will not endanger their economic growth by abandoning the use of coal, a cheap and abundant resource. That observation notwithstanding, even if the entire industrialized world achieved the CO_2 reductions called for in the international Kyoto Protocol, the overall effect on atmospheric levels of CO_2 would be minimal, and global levels would continue to rise substantially.[4] It is important to

note that the technology needed to stabilize global atmospheric levels of CO_2 does not exist, and without it, a Kyoto Protocol in any form is useless. It is currently impossible to supply carbon-free energy in the amounts that would be needed—we simply don't have the needed technology.

This crucial fact, noted in science journals, is woefully ignored. As reported in *Nature*, just to stabilize the atmospheric level of CO_2 at 550 parts-per-million (ppm)—double what it was in pre-industrial times and substantially higher than the present level of about 370 ppm—could require generating as much as 40 terawatts of carbon-free energy. That is four times more than the amount of power currently generated by all the fossil fuels in use in the world today. And, as reported in *Science*, existing technologies cannot address this problem.[5]

Rather than fighting over economically punitive mandates, modeled after the Kyoto Protocol, what is needed is an abandonment of near-sighted legislative fixes in favor of a far-reaching plan for developing effective new technologies. Developing and deploying needed innovative technologies could take 50 to 100 years. The undertaking could cost trillions of dollars, but investments could be spread over decades. Regardless of long-term climate concerns, the effort will lead to new ways to generate large amounts of energy for the continued economic growth of the world economy.

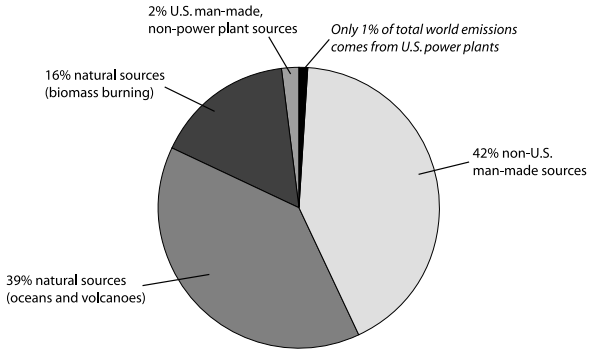
Myth 4: All environmentalists are motivated by altruistic concern for the planet.

Fact: Environmentalists hype scare tactics to raise money.

In a recent full-page *New York Times* ad, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) used a misleading attack on mercury emissions from coal-fired power plants to call for readers to join NRDC and make tax-deductible gifts to the organization.[6]

Contrary to the extremist message of fear communicated in that full-page advertisement, recent findings based on research funded by the U.S. National Institutes of Health, the Food and Drug Administration, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services indicate that the current levels at which Americans consume fish are not harmful. Public officials have not taken reasonable account of this research, which was published in *The Lancet* in May 2003, where, according to Gary Myers, pediatric neurologist at the University of Rochester, there is presently no good scientific evidence that moderate fish consumption is harmful to the fetus. Additionally, there is increasing evidence that the nutrients in fish are important for brain development and perhaps for cardiac and brain function in older individuals.[7]

Emissions of mercury from U.S. coal-fired power plants are small compared to global emissions sources



J.Pacyna, E. Pacyna, F. Steenhuisen, S. Wilson, *Atmospheric Environment*, in press, 2003; Friedli et al., *Atmospheric Environment*, vol. 37: 253–267, 2003.

It is well known that U.S. power plants release minimal mercury emissions to the atmosphere compared with the documented, huge *global* emissions of mercury from human activity and natural sources, much of which is external to the United States (see figure at left). Indeed, given this worldwide reservoir of mercury, EPA does not know if limiting mercury emissions from U.S. power plants will curtail the accumulation of methylmercury in fish below levels that it asserts are of regulatory concern.

Moreover, no matter what mercury emissions controls are put in place at these power plants, the levels of methylmercury in ocean fish will remain virtually unchanged. Simply put, given the fact that the world's oceans contain millions of tons of mercury, reducing some or even all of the roughly 45–48 tons of mercury emissions from U.S. coal-fired power plants will leave the levels of mercury in the world's oceans unchanged and the levels of methylmercury in the ocean fish that Americans eat every day virtually unchanged.

Myth 5 : Environmentalists are all penniless college students, backed by overwhelming scientific opinion.

Fact: Environmental groups have enormous wealth, cry wolf to raise billions of dollars, and their most serious claims have been proven wrong.

Here's a quiz: What do the countries Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Malawi, and Mali all have in common? The answer is: The *entire* gross national product of each of these countries,[8] which they must spend for all purposes, is *less* than the enormous amount of money environmental groups raise and spend each year.

Aggregate donations to environmental organizations in 1999 totaled $3.52 billion—up 94 percent from 1992; this corresponds to a daily average fundraising of $9.6 million.[9] Adding insult to injury, in Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Malawi, and Mali, millions of people become seriously ill or die from mosquito-borne malaria infections

that could be prevented if they could have adequate access to DDT, a pesticide that environmentalist organizations spend tens of millions of dollars annually advocating to get banned from use.

In 2001, the twenty largest environmental groups mailed out over 160 million pieces of direct mail.[10] The five highest-paid business partners of Defenders of Wildlife, one of America's fastest-growing environmental groups, are not conservation groups, but instead are direct mail and telemarketing firms. Six of the largest environmental groups spend so much of their donations raising more money that they do not even meet the minimum performance recommendations of charity watchdog organizations. Eleven of the twenty largest groups include fundraising costs in their tally of money spent protecting the environment, but don't make that clear to members.[11]

> "I now look at the mainstream environmental movement that I loved and can barely recognize it. Why? Because it has abandoned science to follow agendas that have little to do with saving the earth ... We won public support because our protests were founded on logical, scientific arguments. That has largely gone now, to be replaced by a policy of sensationalism, misinformation, and never-ending conflict."
>
> Patrick Moore, founding member and former president of Greenpeace

The use of scare tactics in support of massive fundraising has become so widespread and important as a marketing tool to environmental groups that it has prompted criticism from Patrick Moore, founding member and former president of Greenpeace.[12]

As for environmental "experts" being right all the time, consider this remark:

"By the year 2000 … there won't be any crude oil." [13]

Or this from a 1975 advertisement for The Environmental Fund, which was signed by 39 academics and industry leaders including authors Isaac Asimov, Malcolm Crowley, and Robert Elegant; professor Zbigniew Brzezinski; former Librarian of Congress/poet Archibald MacLeish; Nobel Laureate Albert Szent-Gyorgyi; and U.A.W. President Leonard Woodcock:

"The world as we know it will likely be ruined by the year 2000." [14]

Finally, recall the remark of environmentalist Paul Ehrlich, Bing Professor of Population Studies at Stanford University:

> ***"If I were a gambler, I would take even money that England will not exist in the year 2000 and give 10 to 1 that the life of the average Briton would be of distinctly lower quality than it is today."*** [15]

Myth 6: All environmentalists are peace loving and engage in traditional forms of civil disobedience.

Fact: Some environmentalists are responsible for widespread criminal attacks both here and abroad.

Radical groups such as the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) have engaged in acts of eco-terrorism that have led to the destruction of property valued at millions of dollars. Their extremist tactics endanger people, property, and fundamental agricultural and medical research that can benefit humankind. In fact, thousands of crimes perpetrated by environmentalists have been carried out throughout the world. Almost half the experimental fields of GMO strains in France were destroyed during the summer of 2003, ruining years of research.[16] In the U.S. their acts include: $12 million in arson damages at a resort in Vail, CO; $50 million in arson damages at condominiums in San Diego, CA; $2 million in arson and vandalism damages to car dealerships, and adjacent businesses in the greater Los Angeles area; and $1.2 million in arson damages to a research lab at Michigan State University.[17]

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Myth 7: Businesses are not hurt by onerous environmental regulations.

Fact: Businesses are hurt by such regulations and small businesses are hit particularly hard.

The staggering annual costs[18] encumbering American business and industry in complying with environmental regulations are comparable to the total of all their corporate income tax payments combined.[19] Moreover, as a proportion of expenses, small business enterprises—those having fewer than 20 employees—are among the hardest hit by environmental regulations, paying an average of more than $1,200 per employee in environmental compliance costs alone.[20]

Small companies having fewer than 20 employees are among the hardest hit by environmental regulations.

Taken as a whole, federal regulations cost small business nearly $7,000 per employee, about 60 percent more per employee than costs incurred by a large company.[21] Moreover, in 2003, federal discretionary spending was $825 billion and the total of all individual income taxes paid in 2002 was $1.037 trillion,[22] yet the annual cost to business and industry of all federal regulations is an estimated $843 billion.[23]

Myth 8: Oil can easily be replaced by renewable energy.

Fact: Oil is absolutely essential to all aspects of the American economy.

Petroleum is expected to remain the dominant fuel in the U.S. economy maintaining about a 40 percent market share.[24] Oil is used in residential, commercial, industrial, electric utility and transportation sectors. Without this oil supply, the U.S. economy would collapse, as there is absolutely no possible way to make up for the loss of such a large energy supply with any existing and affordable alternative.[25, 26] For example, renewable energy, even subsidized, has enormous difficulty competing with fossil energy fuels as a reliable energy source. Wind and solar power accounted for only 0.14 percent—about 0.1 million barrels of oil per day equivalent of the total energy share in 2000. By 2020 the amount will increase to about 1.2 million barrels of oil per day equivalent or about 1.7 percent of total energy share in that year.[27]

Some examples of products made from oil		
heart valves	umbrellas	denture adhesive
deodorant	guitar strings	detergents
hearing aids	ballpoint pens	footballs
fertilizers	antiseptics	tennis rackets
fishing boots	pantyhose	artificial limbs
glue	golf bags	solvents

For a more complete list, go to http://www.anwr.org/features/oiluses.htm.

Myth 9: Genetically modified (GM) crops are "bad."

FACT: Enormous human benefit derives from GM crops.

While insects, weeds, and plant diseases destroy nearly 40 percent of conventional crops in Africa and Asia, many of the same GM crops available in North America are helping farmers in South Africa, India, China, and the Philippines to combat insects while reducing or altogether eliminating insecticide use. Indeed, relative to many larger competitors, studies suggest that small farmers are actually realizing disproportionately higher benefits from using GM crops because expensive machinery can at times be made obsolete.[28]

Moreover, GM crops with added nutritional benefits—such as golden rice and high-protein sweet potatoes—should be available soon.[29] And in 1998 alone, use of biotech cotton resulted in 5.3 million *fewer* chemical treatments than in previous years. For example, in the case of Bollgard cotton, growers were able to eliminate the use of more than 250,000 gallons of insecticide.[30]

In 1998, the entire world cereal grain production of 2 billion tons was grown on 700 million hectares of land. In the 1950's, that same grain yield would have required 1.7 billion hectares of arable land.[31]

Myth 10: We are running out of freshwater.

FACT: We have plenty of freshwater, the issue is access to it.

Taken as a whole, there is no shortage of freshwater in the world. However, having *access* to it is a legitimate concern.[32] Water demand is doubling about every 21 years, and global agriculture will require 23 percent more water in the next 30 years. Problems with water access are further complicated by the fact that available supplies are not uniformly distributed and water supply infrastructure is inadequate in many areas of the world. Fortunately, technology is available to desalinate water, and this approach is increasingly being used in areas where freshwater access is limited. Additional approaches to addressing this issue include water storage and reuse, inter-basin transfers, wastewater recycling, water efficiency measures, and other measures.

Desalination technology is constantly being improved, and this progress will continue to bring down technology costs. it is already cost-competitive with other available options, and its use is increasing, for example in California, Massachusetts, and Florida.

Use of genetically modified crops could also mitigate some water access problems. However, countries that could address lack of water access by growing genetically engineered, drought resistant, or salt-tolerant crops may be reluctant to pursue this option if export markets refuse to accept foodstuffs that contain genetically engineered material content. Unfortunately, environmentalists are spending millions of dollars trying to defeat the use of sorely-needed GM crops.

Lack of privatization of the global water industry is also problematic because in many countries public water utilities are highly inefficient, having 5 to 10 times as many employees as are needed. Privatization results in increased efficiency, and mechanisms to facilitate the shift of water management from the public to the private sector should be encouraged.

Endnotes

[1] See figure 60 page 111 in Food and Agriculture Organization, *State of the World's Forests,* 1997 at this Web site, http://www.fao.org/docrep/W4345E/W4345E00.htm.

[2] Source: Roger A. Sedjo, (Resources for the Future) In: *True State of the Planet,* ed. Ronald Bailey, 1995, p. 199.

[3] See Figure 1-1 at this Web site, http://www.epa.gov/indicators/roe/html/tsdAir.htm.

[4] S. Barrett, Environment and Statecraft, Oxford University Press, 2003, Chapter 15.

[5] M.I. Hoffert,, et al. "Energy Implications of Future Stabilization of Atmospheric CO_2 Content" *Nature* 395: 881–884 (1998); and M. I. Hoffert, et al. "Advanced Technology Paths to Global Climate Stability: Energy for a Greenhouse Planet" *Science* 298: 981–987 (2002).

[6] "First Arsenic, Now Mercury" *The New York Times*, March 26, 2004, p. A5.

[7] Professor Gary Myers, University of Rochester, Rochester, NY, Testimony before the Committee on Environment and Public Works, U.S. Senate, July 29, 2003.

[8] U.S. Department of Commerce, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 2003, p. 851

[9] Source: National Center for Charitable Statistics as cited in Sacramento Bee, "Environment, Inc.", April 22, 2001. [NB: Aggregate charitable giving to environmental and wildlife organizations was $6.6 billion in 2002. Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 2003, p. 851]

[10] Source: *Sacramento Bee*, "Environment, Inc.", April 23, 2001.

[11] Source: American Institute of Philanthropy and *Sacramento Bee* [Cited in *Sacramento Bee*, "Environment, Inc.", April 23, 2001.]

[12] Dr. Patrick Moore, founding member and former president of Greenpeace, 2000 [In: "The Great Green Con-Trick", *The Mail on Sunday*, 7 May 2000.]

[13] Kenneth Watt, UC-Davis Professor of Ecology, at the first Earth Day (1970).

[14] *Wall Street Journal*, October 30, 1975.

[15] "Population Control or Hobson's Choice", In: *The Optimum Population for Britain*; L.R. Taylor, Ed. 1970.

[16] Reuters, "French Scientists Call for End to GMO Destruction", Sep. 16, 2003 http://www.forbes.com/newswire/2003/09/16/rtr1082701.html.

[17] Associated Press, "Prominent Incidents Allegedly Linked to ELF, ALF", April 4, 2004.

[18] The cost of environmental regulations in 2000 was about $197 billion. Source: W.M. Crain and T. Hopkins, *The Impact of Regulatory Costs on Small Firms*, Report RFP No. SBAHQ-00-R-0027 for The Office of Advocacy, U.S. Small Business Administration (July 2001).

[19] The total of all corporate income taxes paid in 2002 were $211 billion *Treasury Department Gross Tax Collections: Amount Collected by Quarter and Fiscal Year*, 1987–2003. SOI Bulletin, Historical Table. Excel ver. 4. Issued Quarterly, Internal Revenue Service, Statistics of Income Division. [See Table 8.7 - Outlays for Discretionary Programs: 1962–2009; Budget of the United States Government—Fiscal Year 2005, Historical Tables.].

[20] Footnote 18, *Ibid*.

[21] *Ibid.*

[22] Footnote 19, *Ibid.*

[23] Footnote 18, *Ibid.*, p. 25.

[24] DOE/EIA, *Annual Energy Outlook,* 2003 and *International Energy Outlook*, 2003.

[25] U.S. Energy Association, *National Energy Security Post 9/11*, June 2002, pp. 14-21.

[26] See: http://www.anwr.org/features/oiluses.htm.

[27] Footnote 8, *Ibid*.

[28] G. Conko and C.S. Prakash, "Time for the GM Moratorium to Go" The Wall Street Journal Online, May 13, 2003 at http://online.wsj.com/article_print/0,,SB105278159845412000,00.html.

[29] *Ibid*.

[30] M. Rice, Study on Bt Corn, Iowa State University, Nov 30, 1999.

[31] Testimony of L. Val Giddings PhD, Vice-President of the Biotechnology Industry Organization, before the Senate Committee on Agriculture, 7 October, 1999.

[32] B. Lomborg, *The Skeptical Environmentalist*, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 19-21.

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