

the green guide

+HOW TO LIVE BEYOND THE HYPE

OK, OK, you've got the message about global warming and now you're ready to DO something. But beyond the chatter and hype (buy a hybrid! eat organic! invest in wind power!) what can you do—what should you do—to live more lightly? From what you do in your home to how you get to work and where you eat, making a conscious choice to be kinder to the environment is easy in Seattle. And it turns out that sweating the small stuff (paper or plastic?) may be the biggest mistake you can make.

THINK GLOBALLY, ACT LOCALLY AND GO GREEN.

INTRODUCTION BY CHIP GILLER

I KNEW MY CAUSE HAD hit the big time when Julia Roberts and I appeared in *Vanity Fair* together. Well, I use the word “together” loosely: She was on the cover, and I was somewhere deep inside. But we were both tied to the issue's green theme—and we were both wearing green. (Which made the photo-collage I created later quite pleasing.)

The fact that *Vanity Fair* even published a green issue—never mind the fact that I, a pasty wonk who runs an eco-Web site and spends most of my time sitting at a computer, was in it—is a good indication that something strange is happening in our culture. Over the last couple

of years, society seems to have begun emerging from a decades-long freeze-out of environmentalism, feverishly embracing sustainability instead.

Maybe it was the wakeup call of Hurricane Katrina, or the frontal PR assault launched by Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*. Maybe the Kilimanjaro-sized mountain of scientific data on global warming had something to do with it—or the squishier hints, like the wettest fall in Seattle's history. Whatever the cause, climate change denial is disappearing faster than Arctic icebergs. And activists both famous and obscure are now bound together in a desire to reverse the course

of planetary doom—and have some fun while they're at it.

That's right—fun. You don't have to become some sort of ascetic to be green. You can still shop in Fremont, and take ferry rides, and eat fat, fresh salmon. You just need to live your regular life, but in a thoughtful way.

Easier said than done, I know. But making thoughtful choices makes a big difference. And look, you've already made one: You live in Seattle.

Say what you will about the Emerald City, it's tough to deny that we are leaps and bounds ahead of other American cities in terms of eco-consciousness. I

mean, how many other cities order residents to dispose of greasy pizza boxes by tossing them in with yard waste for composting? And how many other cities have mountains and water in plain sight, as a daily reminder of the potential costs of screwing up?

So congratulations on living in a green place. If you're ready to go a step further, I have a few suggestions for making the choices that count.

But first, a word of advice: Try to avoid getting hung up on small things like the age-old paper versus plastic debate, or the conundrum over whether to use cloth diapers or Huggies. The pros and cons will swirl around until you think your head is going to explode. And frankly, when the entire globe is at risk, your choices on these matters aren't going to count all that much. Sorry. We need bigger things from you.

Focus on the trends and habits in your life—like the source of your food, the mode of your commute, the depths of your energy efficiency, the reach of your politics. These are the issues that tie you into the polluting, globalized infrastructure that so desperately needs to change. These are the issues to get hung up on. Let's take a look at them.

Chews wisely. The organic message has finally caught on, even with Wal-Mart. But what good are organic cukes if they were trucked or flown thousands of miles? If you have to choose between organics from afar or non-organics from nearby, it's better to support your local economy than the global shipping industry.

Once again, Seattle residents are lucky, with easy access to eats that are both local and organic. If you don't already frequent a farmers' market, check out the succulence there. Swing by the Pike Place Market some evening after work, or drop in to a PCC, where Northwest products fill the shelves. If you prefer to grow your own food and don't have any land, sign up for a P-Patch. Groups like IslandWood, Seattle Tilth and the Master Gardener Association can help you (and your young ones) grow.

Ditch your car. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, driving a car is the single most polluting thing most of us do. The monorail is a dusty memory and Seattle's meteoric home prices make it challenging for many to live close to work, but you can still minimize the impact caused by your daily commute. Metro Transit has increased the ecological incentives for bus riding with a growing fleet of hybrid diesel and electric-powered buses. Rideshare programs and Flexcars have also made not owning a vehicle a more realistic option. Light rail is on its way. And with bike paths aplenty, we've got an array of choices.

Socket to them. Since Seattleites crave light from October to April, I won't suggest saving energy by sitting in the dark. While turning lights off is as important as your parents always said, you can also conserve at home by investing in efficient appliances. Don't hang onto an old refrigerator because you're worried about dumping it—recycle it! (And big props to Seattle City Light, the first electric utility in the country to achieve zero net greenhouse-gas emissions.)

eco- HEROES

It's no surprise that Seattle is leading the country on many environmental issues—from Mayor Nickels' leadership on the Kyoto Protocol to the number of sustainable buildings around town. Our eco-success is due to local citizens, policymakers and businesses who are investing heavily in our environment. Meet a few of the people who are blazing greener trails in our region

BY RODDY SCHEER

Throw the bums out. The United States lags behind 138 other countries in the percentage of eligible citizens who vote. If you want to contribute to long-term change, you need to stay informed and involved. By supporting local leaders who have created an action plan to stop global warming—or getting in the faces of those who have not—this city has the opportunity to lead the nation in making change.

Think of greening your life as a route toward a brighter future, not an exercise in giving things up. Who knows—you could end up in a collage with Julia Roberts.

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