

Ask EcoGirl

By Patricia Dines

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Greening Our Money

Dear EcoGirl: I'm anxious about the economy, with rising prices for gas, food, health care, and more. How can we worry about the environment, even global climate change, when real survival issues are at stake? *Signed, Troubled in Santa Maria*

Dear Troubled: Yes, our current economic issues can seem daunting, and it's reasonable to take care of our well-being.

However, it's also vital for us to remember that both our economic and physical survival depend first upon a functioning planet. When our actions damage nature's ecosystems, we're also harming our own financial and physical well-being.

Thus, when fisheries collapse, so do fishermen's livelihoods; mass bee dieoffs risk our food supply; increasingly-severe weather events create a previously-unimaginable scale of destruction; our ravenous hunger for limited oil amplifies its cost; and pollution generates widespread death and disease.

As a beekeeper once said to me, "If you want expensive food, try having no bees."

The earth's physical limits are real. The question is not whether our culture's relationship with the earth will change but how that change will occur.

If we stay on our current path, we'll likely experience escalating and increasingly-irreversible global crises that will force many adjustments upon us.

We do have another choice, though: to proactively choose a constructive transition to a more earth-aligned economy and culture. We can help create this positive outcome, by recognizing the urgency and acting intelligently.

The future that we and coming generations will inhabit depends on what we all do now.

How You Can Nurture This Eco-Transition

1) Understand what "green" really means. Green is used so casually nowadays that the truly meaningful actions can be unclear.

So educate yourself about the key eco-issues and solutions, to contribute to wise approaches and avoid harmful ones. Deepen your understanding by reading non-mainstream sources (such as this paper!) and hearing different perspectives. Be open to constructive solutions, but cautious about easy answers and smooth-talking façades. The rush to corn ethanol, and backlash over its full costs, should warn us about embracing ideas too uncritically.

2) Buy green wisely. Green your home and business purchases by first considering if you can reach your goals without buying something new. Can you reuse or buy used instead? Can you replace disposable products like paper towels with reusable ones like cloth? Only by reducing our consumption notably can we dial back our destruction of the earth.

When buying products, look beyond "green" labels to understand their claims. (Useful information is at <www.greenerchoices.org/eco-labels>.) Invest in the key solutions, such as conservation, alternative energy, local organic agriculture, and home gardening. What we buy is what we encourage.

3) Green your work. As more people support green solutions, more earth-healing jobs are appearing. For leads, see my page <www.healthyworld.org/jobs.html>.

But you don't have to change your job. Explore how you can green your organization's current activities. Get ideas from periodicals and peers. Read *Natural Capitalism* <www.natcap.org>.

4) Green your finances. Even your banking and investments can flow money towards more earth-healthy activities. See <www.greenpages.org> for green bank accounts, credit cards, advisors, periodicals, and more.

5) Save money in ways that nurture the planet and your life. For example, carpooling saves money and energy while connecting you with others. Being in nature costs little and brings a centeredness no product ever will.

6) Help change our economic system. The true solution is changing the play-

ing field, shifting what our economic system rewards so that people's financial well-being aligns with the earth's. Unfortunately, many leaders and businesses are still following outdated economic models. Therefore, it's up to us, the many, to reclaim our power and act for a smarter economy. I encourage you to explore the various remedies being suggested, identify ideas and groups you value, pressure lawmakers, and educate others.

For more information, see *Ecology of Commerce* and *Deep Economy*, two books which propose key principles for our system's redesign. Check out <www.apolloalliance.org> and <www.capanddividend.org> for two examples of win-win approaches. Also search online for "green economics," "green taxes," and "genuine progress indicator," to see the many wonderful options being suggested.

7) Unblock your barriers to action. Action is the antidote to despair! Do you wish you were doing more? Explore what you most want to impact, your barriers to acting, and ways to unblock them. Do you feel too busy? Look for solutions that save time or fit into your current activities. Do you think one can't make a difference? Then consider the harm that our cumulative actions already cause. Or perhaps you haven't found the solutions you seek? Then create them to serve yourself and others!

Yes, looking at these issues can be challenging, but ignoring them only makes them worse. By facing both the dark and the light, the problems and the many solutions just waiting for our support, we can avert catastrophe and co-create a culture that nurtures both people and the planet.

Ask EcoGirl is written by Patricia Dines, Author of The Organic Guides, and Editor and Lead Writer for The Next STEP newsletter. Email your questions to <EcoGirl@AskEcoGirl.info> for possible inclusion in future columns. View past columns at <www.AskEcoGirl.info>. Also contact EcoGirl for information about carrying this column in your periodical. "EcoGirl believes that everyone can be a superhero for the planet. Then she shows you how!"

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