

Ask EcoGirl

By Patricia Dines

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Greening Our Money

Dear EcoGirl: In last month's column, you said that our current economic woes make it increasingly urgent that we shift to more earth-honoring ways, because our economy depends on functioning ecosystems. But how can we do that when everyone's budgets are so challenged? *Signed, Seeking in Sebastopol*

Dear Seeking: Yes, I think a key task of our times is resolving the tension between our current financial and environmental worldviews.

On the one hand, it's reasonable that we seek money to support our daily lives. However, the economic system that generates our lovely material things also rewards the wide-scale environmental destruction that undermines both our physical and financial well-being.

Unfortunately, if we allow our activities to continue ignoring our dependency on the earth, we will increasingly find ourselves and the planet in ruins. (Read *Collapse* to learn how other societies failed this way, and <www.worldwatch.org/node/1606> for more about our economy's reliance on nature.)

Thus, true healing of both our economic and ecological crises requires that we increasingly use our money to encourage activities that honor and align with the earth's ways and our true best interests. Our choices will create our future world.

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 directions 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 playing 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. For solutions, search online for "green economics," "green taxes," and "genuine progress indicator." Read *Ecology of Commerce* and <www.apolloalliance.org>. Find remedies and groups you value, pressure lawmakers, and educate others.

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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