

Ask Eartha Steward

A resolution for the planet

This time of year is filled with resolutions to save money, lose a couple pounds or, if you're in school, to get better grades. While all those are worthwhile, I propose a different kind of resolution; a resolution that will leave our beautiful planet intact for future generations. This resolution also includes shedding some pounds- pounds of greenhouse gases, like carbon dioxide and methane, emitted as products of our daily lives and which contribute to global warming. So, this New Year it's time to examine things we can do to take action to care for the planet by limiting emissions of greenhouse gases.

Let's start off with transportation. We all have read Eartha's pet peeve of idling your car. And you'll read it again- cars only need 30 seconds of idling time before gently driving them to warm up. Get into a routine of bundling up, scraping the windows until they're free of frost, and stop that idling. Yes, engines are cleaner these days, but they still emit carbon dioxide, which can't be cleaned up. Limit what you emit.

Another great way to limit emissions is taking alternative transportation, like carpooling or riding the bus, two times per week. If you're not an alternative transportation type of person, then the best way to reduce emissions from transportation is by driving a fuel efficient vehicle. A car that averages 27.5 miles per gallon (mpg) will emit approximately 54 tons of carbon dioxide over the car's lifetime; the average sport utility vehicle that gets 14 mpg will emit 100 tons of carbon dioxide over the lifetime. The car you drive is one of the most important steps to reducing global warming.

We can also take actions in our homes that will prevent emissions from entering the atmosphere. Installing a programmable thermostat can save 1800 pounds of carbon dioxide from entering the atmosphere. Plus it's convenient because you program it to warm up a room right before you get up in the morning, set it to turn down once you leave the house, and then set it again to warm up right before you get home in the evening. And, you'll save about \$100 per year on energy bills.

Outside the home there are actions you can take as well. Like bringing your own bag to the grocery store, purchasing products with minimal and recyclable packaging, and buying local and organic. Actions you can take in the office or at school include: using both sides of paper, installing energy saving compact fluorescent bulbs, setting computers to energy saving mode, buying recycled paper, or even creating a green buying plan.

If you're wondering how the actions listed in the last paragraph save emissions, you'll have to stop by Eartha's Green Shop at the High Country Conservation Center. The High Country Conservation Center has partnered with the Colorado Carbon Fund (www.coloradocarbonfund.org) to promote a carbon offset program that supports local energy programs. Visit our office at 518 Main Street to learn how you can join the program and make a tax-deductible donation that reduces your carbon footprint. The

program also provides information to help you trim down your daily impact while learning new and creative ways to walk a little lighter on our planet.

Also, stop by to check out the emissions worksheet HC3 has put together that can help you identify areas in your life to reduce your emissions and help stop global warming. More information on carbon offsets and the Colorado Carbon Fund, visit www.highcountryconservation.org or email info@highcountryconservation.org

Eartha Steward is written by Carly Wier and Jennifer Santry, consultants on all things eco and chic at the High Country Conservation Center, a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization dedicated to waste reduction and resource conservation in our mountain community. Eartha believes that you can walk gently on our planet, even if you're wearing stylee shoes.