

Don't mess with Mother Nature

Website offers solutions that benefit people and the planet

Thursday is Earth Day, but it really should be every day. You wouldn't set aside just one day a year to take care of your house, and the Earth is like everybody's house. A home requires some daily TLC — some weekly, some seasonal — and the occasional big project.

We're not taking care of our collective house because the environment, like just

about everything else, has become another wedge issue between extremists on the political right and left. People who support initiatives designed to protect the environment are derided as tree-huggers who don't care about jobs. People who support eliminating environmental regulations to cut costs for businesses are accused of putting profits over the planet.

Most reasonable people know there is a middle ground. We need to take care of our planet or it will stop taking care of us. And we need to do it in a way that makes life better for everyone. The Nature Conservancy's website, nature.org, offers solutions to many environmental problems that also are economically beneficial.

The organization lists four priorities on the site: tackle climate change, protect land and water, provide food and water sustainably, and build healthy cities. Its strategy is to present solutions based on science to foster collaboration among various stakeholders, especially local communities that will be affected. Often this involves using nature-based remedies, such as planting trees, using cover crops or restoring river flows, that improve ecosystems and economies. Acquiring and preserving critical habitats

is a big part of what it does. Mother Nature has many ways of cleaning up her own messes, so often just letting nature take its course is the best way to clean the air and water or enrich the soil.

The site is full of articles detailing the issues, potential solutions and examples of projects around the world that the Conservancy has partnered in or plans to. The stories are well written and accompanied by beautiful photography, video and graphics. They explain the processes by which nature restores itself and how they can be managed to benefit our health and wealth. A recurring theme is that by working with nature, instead of trying to control it, the Earth can continue to provide the resources we need for healthy lives even as the population grows.

In addition to the articles, there's an interactive map showing where the organization has land or projects. There's also a carbon footprint calculator to help you reduce your personal impact on the planet. You'll need a lot of information — car mileage, utility costs, etc. — to get an accurate analysis.

The Nature Conservancy has a lot of balls in the air and appears to expend a lot of resources. All of this important work requires lots of time and money. There are several sections of the site devoted to recruiting people to take action or donate money. You can make one-time donations or become a member. Members receive regular electronic correspondence and the organization's magazine.

Nature.org is full of interesting and enlightening content. If you spend enough time on this site, you will realize the solutions to our environmental problems are available and affordable. We just have to agree to implement them.

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