

WATER WORLD

We need to protect the blue if we want to be green

Friday marked the passing of another Earth Day. As we race toward an irreversible tipping point for climate change, the things we do between these annual celebrations of our planet become more critical. The latest word from experts is that we still have a chance to mitigate the worst outcomes if governments live up to the commitments they've already made.

Almost three quarters of the planet is covered by water. One of the most important things we can do to save the Earth is to save the oceans. They are home to most of the life on Earth, provide nourishment for billions of people and play a central role in regulating climate.

Oceana.org is the website of an organization dedicated to saving our seas. Some conservation websites can be depressing. They focus on admonishing people for bad behavior and make the problem seem so vast that it feels hopeless. Oceana takes a more positive approach. Its goal is to devise solutions that help preserve the life and health of the oceans, and meet the needs of people who rely on them for sustenance. Which it turns out is all of us.

This doesn't mean it sugarcoats the problem. There's plenty of information on the harm we're inflicting on the environment. But it focuses more on solutions. The site gives examples of how the organization has used data and science to convince governments and businesses around the world to modify the way they do business. This involves reducing the amount of pollutants we put into the water and changing the way we take resources out of the water.

One of the campaigns on the site is called Refill Again. It focuses on urging

beverage companies to use refillable bottles instead of single-use plastic. Even modest shifts in this direction by the biggest companies would dramatically reduce the amount of plastic going into the ocean.

Another campaign is sustainable fishing. Oceana does not want people to stop fishing. In fact it sees seafood as a tremendous resource to feed a growing population. What it wants to do is change the way commercial fishing operates. The research indicates there are three main areas where change would create sustainable fisheries. One is abandoning damaging fishing methods, such as dragging nets across the sea floor that catch everything in their path and damage coral reefs. Another is avoiding fishing in nursery areas where species replenish their numbers. The third is respecting quotas on how many fish can be taken so their numbers are not depleted to a point that they can't recover.

The site has a "take action" section that allows your voice to be heard. You can add your name to various petitions asking governments and corporations to be better environmental stewards.

There also is some wonderful eye candy on the site. A section called Marine Life has beautiful photos and videos of some of the amazing creatures that inhabit the sea. Another section called Expeditions has images from some of the research trips Oceana has taken in exotic locales around the world.

For those who are really interested in the cause, this site has lots of information. You could spend hours reading the many articles on important topics involving saving our oceans. For the more casual visitor, it gives a good overview of the problems and solutions.

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