



New Year's Revolution

Previously we discussed the tension between evolution (small steps) and revolution (big steps).

I proposed that we aren't going to change the world with small steps - it's probably too late for that. On the other hand many people aren't yet ready to make the big changes, for whatever reason. So what can you do in the meantime?

Take the issue of cars. Responsible for a large percentage of the greenhouse gases in our atmosphere they are almost essential to life in most of America. Hybrids, electric cars, public transportation, all are part of the solution. But while we are waiting there are small things we can do. Here's a few simple starters - but don't forget the big changes that you are going to make later.

1. Change at least some of your light bulbs to Compact Florescent (CFL) or LED. You don't have to change them all - each time a bulb fails replace it with a more efficient version. Costco now sell under-cabinet LED bulbs that only use 2.5 watts for four bulbs, compared to about 24 watts for regular florescent, and 80 watts for regular bulbs. Stores like Home Depot often sell packs of CFL bulbs that are subsidized by the utilities. Buy and store for future use.

2. Use less water. Time your showers - use a waterproof timer to tell you when to stop, or buy a new super-efficient shower head that uses half the water of normal efficient heads (by injecting air into the water). Flush less often (if it's yellow, let it mellow...) or install a low flow (or waterless) urinal

in the mens room. Use economy settings in the dishwasher and use the rinse cycle less often.

3. Drive less often - you don't have to get a hybrid yet. Take one less trip to town if you can. Carpool occasionally. Combine visits - when you go town for coffee visit the bank, post office and all the other chores you can at the same time. Keeps lists to make sure that you get all you need. Alternate using your car with your neighbors. Carpool to the mainland - it saves on fuel, fares and gets us ready for when WSF reduce the service. Walk when you can, you'll lose weight and feel better too...

4. Buy in bulk. Whether you shop at the Market Place or Costco, buying generic brands, in bulk usually saves money. Who makes generic brands? Usually the same companies who make the more expensive brands. Comparison shop. Buy items you use when they are on sale: soft drinks, shampoo and bath tissue all last a long time. Try to avoid buying items that are out of season, or goods that have travelled a long way.

5. Buy 'fair trade', 'certified organic', and/or locally grown when you can. It won't save you money but it will ensure that people are being paid, and treated, better than people who sell to the chain stores. Avoid companies that don't pay fair wages and/or use sweatshops. What's that motto - 'Just do it!'. The only way they'll change is by loss of sales to concerned consumers.

6. Make your yard or land more organic and better for the environment. Leave more trees standing, plant more native plants (they often feed birds and animals in winter), plant fruit trees or berries, turn some lawn into meadow and use less fertilizer. Chip your woody debris and use it as mulch rather than burning it. Pool with neighbors to buy a chipper, or rent one as needed. Establish a lending circle for expensive gardening or power tools.

7. Learn to compost and start composting your vegetable and fruit clippings (no fat or meat). You don't need a fancy (expensive) composting bin, just use a 5 gallon pail with a snap tight lid. Sprinkle some sawdust in and a little shredded clean paper waste in to absorb liquids and reduce smell. Use on your garden when ready. Grow your own flower, fruits or vegetables - use the square-foot gardening technique (there's a book on it) - it's so easy even I can do it!

8. Eat more local fruit and vegetables in season and eat less meat. You don't have to be a vegetarian, or a vegan, just eat less animal protein which is energy intensive to eat. Most Americans eat about twice the animal protein they need. When you have to eat meat such as beef try to eat local grass-fed beef. It's healthier for both the environment and you. Allow yourself something tasty but unhealthy from time to time.

9. Spend less on junk at christmas/the holidays. So much these days is made in China, or sweatshops elsewhere. American jobs have been outsourced to countries that are 'cheaper' because the lack labor and environmental laws. Spend more of your (hard-earned) money here in the San Juan's, or as locally as possible. Give somebody what they need, and where possible give them the gift of your time.

Make your new year's resolution to change a behavior. Start doing something good for the environment. Don't spend your time trying to do something you probably will have given up by January 2nd.

Finally you don't have to be perfectly environmental in every way, just do a little more now than you did before, and keep on doing more all the time.