

GOAT Workshop - Responding to Our Every Day Environmental Dilemmas in Practical and Sustainable Ways 2.28.16

On February 28, 2016, GOAT held a session to share ecological dilemmas that trouble or challenge us and to get share ideas and get support for addressing those dilemmas.

Bananas – tasty and an excellent source of potassium. However, they are grown far away and transportation carbon footprint, some agricultural practices that rely upon pesticides, and concerns about worker pay and treatment are concerns. If one decides to eat bananas, then choose organic bananas with no packaging and a fair trade designation. There may be a small banana industry in the U.S. but apparently blight has hit those growers badly. See <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/green-living-blog/2010/jul/01/carbon-footprint-banana> and <http://www.onegreenplanet.org/animalsandnature/the-human-and-environmental-impact-of-bananas/>

Cassette tapes, CD's, and DVD's that are no longer needed or useful to others can be recycled through Green Disk. One can purchase a postage paid mailing box and then ship to the company in Washington State. <http://www.greendisk.com>

Batteries, light bulbs, etc. Shift to LED and CFL lights. Recycle with either public or private sources. A strong recommendation for Mom's Organic Market <http://www.momsorganicmarket.com> as a place to take these items to be recycled.

If one has to drive, what is the best **gas** to purchase? Not sure that we came up with good ideas for this one. Further research led to the discovery that Sunoco and BP, even taking the Gulf oil spill into account, are the least environmentally damaging. Exxon is the worst. <http://www.earthsfriends.com/environmental-gas-station/>

What to do about volumes of **junk mail**? Some Friends have used [catalogchoice.org](https://www.catalogchoice.org/) with mixed but generally successful results. <https://www.catalogchoice.org/>. Another idea is to write "Remove from mailing list" on the tear-off with your name and address, sign, and return in the envelope provided. Further research led to Direct Marketing Association's DMAchoice at <https://www.dmachoice.org/>

Computers – while paper use may be reduced with the increased number of online transactions, are computers really as green as some

people think? Aren't they hard to recycle and contain heavy metals and rare earth minerals that are difficult to mine and create both environmental and health issues for people involved in those extraction (or even reclamation) industries? Further research led to the advice that the most environmentally-friendly computer is the one you already own. Can you install new software, upgrade the one you have, do without the latest and greatest? Also found <http://rankabrand.org/electronics/> and <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/campaigns/climate-change/cool-it/Campaign-analysis/Guide-to-Greener-Electronics/>.

Gift giving. Is it environmentally better to shop online than in-store? What about Amazon, many people's choice for convenient online shopping? Perhaps we should look further into Amazon's environmental profile. Here is a Green America blog article that explores that question:

<http://blog.greenamerica.org/2014/11/18/alternatives-to-amazon-environmentally-and-socially-responsible-holiday-retailers/>

Alternative energy sources. Several companies supply wind and solar energy. You sign up with the energy supplier you choose and get one bill from BGE since BGE is the distributor. Though it may cost a bit more, the resulting cleaner air can reduce the need for such items as asthma medication. Groundswell is a co-op that negotiated with WGES to obtain reduced prices for residential customers in our area.

<http://groundswell.org/clean-energy/>

What to do with old **medications** so not to pollute the soil or water. One idea is to use the CVS program to collect unused/unneeded medications. Purchase a postage paid mailing envelope for about \$4 and mail back the medications.

<http://www.environmentalleader.com/2011/08/17/all-cvs-locations-now-recycle-unwanted-medication/>

In the process of **down sizing**, trying to figure out how to give away articles of clothing, household items, etc. in a responsible manner. More neighborhoods have give away/take away programs through Facebook or community blog sites. Some charitable organizations are very effective and efficient, others not so. Vietnam Veterans of America was cited as being particularly good

<http://www.schedulepickup.com>. Goodwill was also mentioned.

So, the discussion was lively and interesting, but as we drew close to the end of our time together, the question was raised, **“what difference does individual change/action make?”** Would it be

better to work more hours and make more money to contribute to organizations that lobby on behalf of environmental legislation?

Perhaps not an either/or thing. There is a growing body of research that individual action and sharing of one's actions does make a difference. When we make and sustain conscious choices to live greener, we are building habits which begin to have an effect that is no longer "drops in the bucket". Science meets faith. When change becomes personal, it becomes possible.

Other resources:

How to Recycle Anything <http://www.realsimple.com/home-organizing/organizing/organizing-tips-techniques/recycle-anything>
Maryland Recycling Directory <http://mdrecycles.org/recycling-directory/>