

THE WAYS OF THE EARTH



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There are fundamental truths about the Earth system that we must face in the next few years. The webs of deception from the last few years are receding, so we can now confront

issues that have been invisible for a long time. Much of our human world is now driven by science and technology. Science is a good frame for understanding our technological world, as well as the complexity of the living natural world. However, science is not useful for addressing social values and making moral choices.

In this void, choices are made implicitly by our (Western) society's guiding economic frame which is capitalism. New things are invented and if they can be marketed profitably, they are introduced with little control. The goal of capitalism is to increase short-term profits within a consumer growth economy. Growth is driven by advertising and by exploiting the Earth's resources as well as people, especially the poor.

Immense wealth has been created for some, and the human population has increased until our global impact exceeds the Earth's carrying capacity. Now climate and extinction crises are rapidly approaching, simply because much of our economic system is not designed to pay for future costs, especially the damaging consequences of our vast waste streams.

Consider instead the *Blue River Declaration from October 2011*.

"A truly adaptive civilization will align its ethics with the ways of the Earth. A civilization that ignores the deep constraints of its world will find itself in exactly the situation we face now, on the threshold of making the planet inhospitable to humankind and other species. The questions of our time are thus: What is our best current understanding of the nature of the world? What does that understanding tell us about how we might create a concordance between ecological and moral principles, and thus imagine an ethic that is of, rather than against, the Earth?"

"In our time, science, religious traditions, Earth's many cultures, and artistic insights are all converging on a shared understanding of the nature of the world: The Earth is our home. It will always be our only source of shelter, sustenance, and inspiration. There is no other place for us to go. It follows that the world is worthy of reverence, awe, and care."

Clearly, ten years later, U.S. society has not made this transition to align its ethics with the ways of the Earth. The recent change in the federal administration will not fix our poor social and economic understanding of the living natural world. I suggest readers view the sincere efforts to address climate change by the Biden Administration through^o the clear lens of the Blue River Declaration, a statement of

environmental ethics put forward by the Blue River Quorum.

This means facing a deeper issue. Even though we are embedded in the biosphere, very few people understand this intellectually, let alone intuitively. Reconnecting deeply with the natural world means surrendering to it, so you feel part of it on an emotional and heartfelt level. Indigenous peoples and the founder of Christianity understood this. But the concept of surrender is horrifying to 'modern' humans, because of our devotion to human power and control, and our memories of many centuries of warfare.

We have two critical tasks in this coming decade. One is to slow climate change by reducing the global atmospheric carbon budget to net-zero, which means to stop burning fossil fuels. This is turn means focusing on improving energy efficiency and implementing renewable energy resources on a much larger scale than we do currently to replace the fossil fuels. The technologies to do this have become

relatively inexpensive – far cheaper than the costs of the climate disasters ahead, if we do not make this transition. The only big obstacle -- which has been with us for decades -- is that the fossil fuel companies and their associates are heavily invested

in deceiving the public and using politicians to protect their profits as long as possible. Their recent strategy has been to reframe the issues to pretend that climate change can be solved by individuals changing their choices and behaviors, so that direct legislative mandates can be avoided.

The second difficult task is to see that the human destruction

of so much of the natural world is driving many species to extinction and replace destruction with reverence. Neither task is easy, so we all have to plan ahead. Spring is arriving and, if we look more deeply, the Earth can help.

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The Earth is our common home. Image: onecommunityglobal.org