

Focus on Kentucky: Alternative Energy

Kentucky generates 97% of its electricity from coal, but nationally coal accounts for 52% of U.S. electrical production. Other sources for American electricity include:

- Gas 16%;
- Nuclear 20%;
- Hydroelectric 7%; and
- Renewable/Other 2%.

While Kentucky has approximately 250 years of coal deposits, environmental concerns may diminish the importance of coal, because its burning produces carbon dioxide, a major greenhouse gas. Greenhouse gases threaten global warming bringing:

- more floods;
- uncertain agricultural production; and
- altered patterns of living for humanity and the rest of creation.

Public Policy:

In 1980 coal mining employed 46,000 Kentuckians, but by 2000 that number dropped to 15,500. Given that global warming remains a concern and employment in Kentucky needs sustainable industries, public policy may better serve the Commonwealth by promoting alternative energies. Geothermal, biomass, wind, photovoltaic and other means represent energy sources that are:

- local and decentralized;
- renewable and less polluting; and
- carbon-constrained for reducing greenhouse gases.

Public policy that requires at least a 10% source for electricity from renewable energy would create jobs, clean the environment and preserve the original beauty of Kentucky for future generations.

For Discussion and Reflection

1. How is concern for the environment an expression of my respect for God? For others?
2. In what ways do I waste resources in my daily life?
3. How are low income people in the United States affected by environmental hazards?
4. Who benefits, and who loses, by public policy that does not protect the environment?
5. List examples of environmental injustice in your region, in the United States.
6. How can Christians answer the “jobs versus the environment” argument?
7. What is sustainability? What steps can we take to promote sustainability in Kentucky?
8. How important is protecting endangered species to ensure diversity in nature?



Scripture Meditations

Genesis: 1 and 2

Leviticus 25:23—24

Romans 1:20; 8:19-23



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CARE

Of God's



CREATION

As we seek the path of sustainable community based on the oneness of land and people, it is helpful to remember that all creation is itself creative, for it reveals the creative word of God.

...Thus the water and the land and the plants and animals, and we humans too, are all expressions and revelations of God's word of creation.

**At Home in the Web of Life
a Statement from the Appalachian Catholic Bishops**

**Economic Justice
in 21st Century Kentucky:
Holding Ourselves Accountable
7—At Home
in the Web of Life**

CARE OF CREATION

The Web of Life

God entrusts us with the gift of creation. The air, the earth, the plants and animals all reflect God's beauty and speak about our place in this intricate web of life.

The principle of stewardship insists that we take **care of God's creation** through our patterns of work and consumption. Jobs versus the environment poses a false dichotomy begging Christians to work more holistically to reverence God's gift.

Creation can never become simply an input to production filling our lives with frivolous consumer goods. Rather, the use of creation demands a respect for creation's intrinsic worth and its legacy for future generations.

Social Mortgage

Since God owns creation (Ps. 24:1) and intends its future completion (Rom. 8:21), all creation comes with a *social mortgage* that limits what people can do with their property. Property rights are never absolute rights, but are conditioned by the common good and a call for a fair distribution of the earth's goods.



For More Information:

Visit the website of Appalachia-Science in the Public Interest, www.aspi@a-spi.org.

Scripture Speaks

God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good. (Gen. 1:31)



The earth is the LORD'S and all it holds, the world and those who live there. (Ps. 24:1)

Praise him, sun and moon; give praise, all shining stars... You mountains and all hills, Fruit trees and all cedars... (Ps. 148:3, 9)

...that creation itself would be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God. (Rom. 8:21)



People in Kentucky

The environment directly and indirectly affects the health and happiness of the people in Kentucky.

- The American Cancer Society estimates in 2004 Kentucky will experience over 22,000 new cases of cancer.
- Nearly 3,400 will die from lung cancer alone in Kentucky.
- More than 21% of people in Kentucky have asthma.
- Thousands suffer from Black Lung and other industry related illnesses.

In addition, the Kentucky Geological Survey estimates that aquatic life has been diminished from pollution in nearly one-fourth of its evaluated streams, and half the state's private drinking-water wells are contaminated by bacteria.

The Church Speaks

Man's dominion over inanimate and other living beings granted by the Creator is not absolute; it is limited by concern for the quality of life of his neighbor, including generations to come; it requires a religious respect for the integrity of creation. Cf. *Centisimus Annus 37-38. Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2415.

Man is suddenly becoming aware that by an ill-considered exploitation of nature he risks destroying it and becoming in his turn the victim of this degradation...The Christian must turn to these new perceptions in order to take on responsibility.

Octagesimo Adveniens, n. 21.

Pope Paul VI

Respect for life and for the dignity of the human person extends also to the rest of creation, which is called to join humanity in praising God.

The Ecological Crisis: A Common Responsibility, n. 16.

John Paul II