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# COMMON SENSE II

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*Capitalizing on the familiarity and influence of Thomas Paine’s “Common Sense” pamphlets that provided American colonists with exposure to the conversation of great thinkers in the pre-Revolutionary period, this paper assumes the name COMMON SENSE II. Similarly, today’s series of pamphlets strives to give a direct response to great political events and ideas of our time.*

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April 2022

Earth Issue

Vol. 17 Issue 4

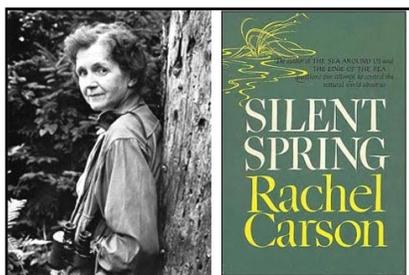
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## Earth Day, 2022: Invest in Our Planet

By Vicki Andrews

The first Earth Day was April 22, 1970, fifty-two years ago. Americans had become obsessed with their cars and were doing more driving each year, using vast amounts of leaded gas without realizing the effects this would have on the environment. According to [www.Earthday.org](http://www.Earthday.org), our automobiles were large and inefficient, factories emitted massive amounts of smoke and sludge, and air pollution was considered by many as the “smell of prosperity.” Most Americans remained totally oblivious to the potential damage and long range consequences to our planet as well as all those living on it. There was plenty of sky out there for the results of pollution to disappear into. Nothing to worry about, folks.

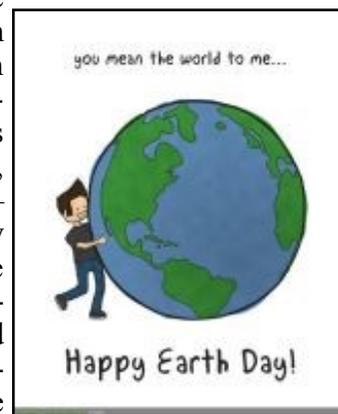
A major change in our understanding began with the publication of Rachel Carson’s important book, *Silent Spring*, in 1962. It raised public concern about how we were endangering the environment and started



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people thinking about the possible future consequences. Senator Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin became especially concerned about the fate of the Earth (and its inhabitants) especially when a massive oil spill occurred in Santa Barbara, California in 1969. He came up with an idea for teach-ins at college campuses around the country and persuaded Pete McCloskey, a Republican Representative, and Dennis Hayes, a young activist, to work with him on that. They chose April 22, 1970, for the events; it became known as Earth Day and an annual event.

Unfortunately, focusing attention on the damage we were doing to the Earth needed more than one day a year. Earth Day was a great beginning, it raised awareness and inspired many to act, but more was needed—much more. Earth Day is now recognized as the largest secular observance in the world with more than one billion people around the world participating in cleaning up the environment, raising awareness of air and water pollution, and creating policy changes on local, national, and international levels. But the problem continues and is getting worse. More, much more, must be done.



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According to [www.Earthday.org](http://www.Earthday.org), “We need to act boldly, innovate broadly, and implement equitably.” The Earth Day theme for 2022 is “Invest in Our Planet. What will you do?” Ask yourself now, “What will you do?” and ask your friends and family. Earthday.org has 52 suggestions for how you can invest in our planet. Rather than listing them here, I would suggest that you visit their website, [www.earthday.org](http://www.earthday.org) and scroll down the section titled Earth Day 2022—Invest in Our Planet. The other sections have interesting and inspiring thoughts and ideas; be sure to check them out, too.

Locally, the Earth Circle and Indivisible are collaborating on a special Earth Day observance in Grand Rapids on Friday, April 22, 2022. We will be meeting—with signs—on the Pokegama Avenue Bridge from 3:00-4:00 pm and then walking to Central School, where we will stand until 5:00 pm. Please join us if you can; if you can’t stop, as you drive by please honk your support.

# The Long and Winding Road to Local Solar Power

By Bill Schnell

The Itasca Clean Energy Team got organized in January 2016 to promote local renewable energy. Our goal was a one megawatt community solar garden, big enough to power about 175 average-sized homes.

We spent two years engaging the community and working with Grand Rapids Public Utilities (GRPU) staff to design a solar project that was right for Grand Rapids. We had help from the Sierra Club, Blandin Foundation, Clean Energy Resource Teams, and the University of Minnesota's Rural Sustainable Development Program.

In 2018, GRPU hired a nationally known solar consulting firm to help develop specifications for the project. They evaluated how to maximize the economic benefits of the project to GRPU and its customers. Results showed that adding energy storage capability with a bank of lithium-ion batteries would add significant value. Why? Because the wholesale cost of conventional power from the grid varies greatly, as it depends on the regional demand for power at any given time. GRPU could save money by using the solar power stored in the batteries at the times when the grid price of energy is highest.

By November of 2018, GRPU was preparing to seek bids from solar developers across the country. Then Minnesota Power, GRPU's wholesale power supplier, intervened. MP claimed that GRPU would be in breach of contract if they went ahead with the solar project on their own. Instead, they "offered" to take over the contracting and construction process themselves and then pass the resulting solar power through to GRPU. GRPU commissioners weighed the cost of a legal fight and reluctantly accepted this arrangement. This loss of local control ended up adding more than a year to the contracting process.

Ultimately, 22 bids were received from all over the country.

One important change that occurred due to bidder input was to double the size of the

solar array to two megawatts capacity. Analysis showed that this will make better use of the batteries. The winning bid was from US Solar, a well-established firm with nationwide experience and based in Minneapolis. At this point, COVID-related supply chain issues led to further delay.



Typically, a community solar garden's long term economic benefits are limited to subscribers, who can afford to pay a little extra for their electricity now in exchange for long term savings. Given the expected cost savings, GRPU decided to avoid the administrative costs of managing a subscription program and simply make this renewable energy part of their base power supply. **Now all of their customers will benefit!**

There are bonus benefits:

### Environmental:

- ◆ We'll see a reduction in our carbon footprint.
- ◆ The entire site will be managed as a pollinator garden.

### Economic:

- ◆ A local contractor was used for site prep.
- ◆ Half of the solar panels were produced by Heliene at their plant in Mountain Iron, Minnesota.

### Equity:

- ◆ All GRPU customers will save money on their electric bills.

### Educational:

- ◆ Site tours will be offered to local students.

Our solar-plus storage system will provide 8% of GRPU's electricity annually and is the first of its kind in the northern half of the state. The array is located along Airport Road and east of Home Depot. Construction is complete and power generation has begun!

**There will be a ribbon-cutting event on site May 3<sup>rd</sup> at 10:00 am. Join us!!**



**Here Comes The Sun!!**

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## A Leap of Faith

By Bob Passi

We find ourselves seemingly locked into an all-encompassing system determined by a set of financially dominant leaders based on the principles of free-market capitalism and implemented by technology. There is little concern for the individual human being, or, for that matter, any human factors. It is mechanistic and totally beyond any control we might exert as individuals.

Within that system there is little to offer individuals who are trying to survive but are only allowed a submissive role in and must play by the rules of that system. In the process we watch the human spirit shrivel and die before our eyes, since it can neither be sustained nor nurtured in a system that focuses on seeing all life—both human and natural—as merely saleable commodities and uses technology to further those ends. **We see nature being decimated, the planet stripped bare, and democracy under attack.**

**What can we do?**

What are we willing to risk in the pursuit of a different way of life? **Are we willing to let go of the meagre lifestyle we are being offered, and instead accept the belief that there is a better, more human approach to life on this planet?**

One way to accomplish this change is to realize that we can keep private ideas and beliefs within our minds and hearts no matter what masks we may be required to wear on the outside. We have historical examples such as the early Christians within the Roman Empire secretly meeting in the catacombs or of the masks that slaves learned to wear during slavery in the South while plotting slave rebellions and using the Underground Railroad to find freedom.

**Such a change allows us to focus on a better way of living instead of trying to fight the present system from within, putting our energy into positive changes and a new system instead of wasting our energy trying to batter down the walls of the present system.**

As a matter of fact, **we do not need to destroy capitalism or technology but simply to rise above them to create a world in which capitalism and technology support human goals and a sustainable future, a world in which the needs of the ordinary people control and direct how capitalism and technology can best function—in other words, to resurrect democracy.**

**To create such a new world, we need both an individual and a social “leap of faith” to step out of the morass of the present empty system and into**

a humanized system that offers survival for us, for nature, and for the planet.

**A leap of faith is to take a risk with no guarantee of success.** It is a step into an unknown future which will test your vision and your adaptability. It will test your strength, your resolve, and your



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internal resources. On the positive side, it will also offer growth and development and an opportunity to discover things about yourself that you may not have known were there. **It is an opportunity for transformation, perhaps a blossoming into the “you” that you always hoped for but were almost afraid to explore.**

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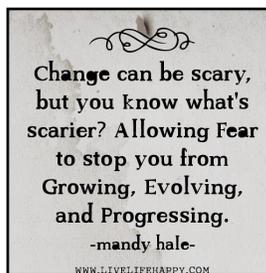
What spurs such leaps can vary. It can sometimes be the feeling of being stuck without a way to make progress. It can be a sense that you are in the wrong place in your life. It can be that you have no other options for survival. Or it can be some event that changes everything in your life. Whatever it may be, it requires that you dare to walk away from the norms of the life you find yourself living. In our present situation, **it is the awareness of the dystopian direction of the present system and the looming necessity of finding a new way to live humanly and sustainably on this planet.**

The hope is to move to a new place in your life, to discover what other capabilities you have, or how to use your known capabilities in different ways. It is a rising above the ordinariness of your life to find new options, new possibilities and perhaps a new life. **It is becoming an empowered citizen.**

**The leap itself means you must let go of an old, dysfunctional system.** It is a release that allows new growth. It is a belief that there is something out there that is better and more fulfilling than where you now find yourself. It is always a personal choice, even when others are also doing it.

Such a social leap of faith offers not only the opportunity for the survival of the human spirit, but also the re-creation of a democracy that restores balance within the web of life and the survival of a sustainable planet.

(Continued on page 4)



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### Do we dare to make that leap?

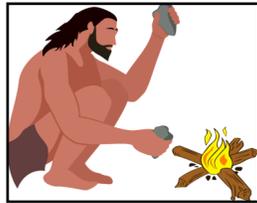
**Such a leap requires embracing the possibility of transformation. It requires an acceptance of new paradigms and a new narrative with stories of earlier successes by groups and individuals as inspiration. It requires recognizing the earlier prophets who predicted such a downfall and offered solutions. It requires remembering those who came before and led the way. It requires inspiration and dedication to accomplish such transformative ends.**

### Moral Economics

By Valerie Conner

All resources are finite, even the air we breathe, especially if we want to breathe unpolluted air. Economics is the study and management of these finite resources, which involves the distribution of resources. Today money tends to be the lubricant for that distribution. Unfortunately, money does not determine the fair and equitable distribution of resources. Insane wealth and abject poverty are witnesses to this, but let's leave that discussion for another day.

The most important and increasingly immediate economic concern for us is the preservation of the collective resources of Earth itself. What our basic needs today are has evolved as humans have "progressed" through the millennia. The proverbial cave man sufficed with food, shelter, and crude garments. Today, most in the developed world would be lost without their cell phone, motorized transportation, central heating, and indoor plumbing. Those necessities of modern life come at a cost, not just in a utility bill at the end of the month



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but also in the strain on the life sustaining resources of our planet.

Each advancement in civilization has been intended to improve and ease life for us. Cars, for example, were initially seen as an air quality improvement over the stench of horse manure in the streets. Chemical fertilizers were intended to and did increase food production, thus helping to feed the Earth's increased population. Both of these "advancements" have come at a cost.

Our focus now is on climate change. While some callously try to deny its existence or at least human activity's influence on it, climate change exists and is becoming increasingly evident and irreversible. Some people deny climate change because they've bought into its politicization; others refuse to take responsibility lest they be forced to change their lifestyle; still others dwell on the short term monetary cost, ignoring the long term cost.

Progress involves letting go of parts of the past to embrace an improved future. Modern conveniences are more than convenient. Modern medicine has improved our quality of life and saved lives. The tradeoff is the high cost of healthcare. Our transportation system has improved our living but at a huge cost to air quality.

People employed in the fossil fuel industry may see a move to renewable energy sources as job threatening. They need to let go of the past and embrace the job and career opportunities in clean and healthier energy production. The buggy whip factory workers eventually found new careers in the automobile industry.

Change is inevitable. Management of the Earth's resources needs to be moral; that is, it needs to look forward to improve our current lives while preserving the resources for our future lives. We have the knowledge and need. We just need the will to use our resources for the good of all, which in turn will be monetarily advantageous for all. It's the moral thing to do.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS: GET INVOLVED AND GET IT DONE!

### Event

### Date /Time

### Location

DFL Headquarters Open (326-6296)  
Itasca Progressive Caucus (259-4490)  
DFL Central Committee Meets  
DFL Social Club & Lunch  
DFL Pot Luck (Open to the Public)  
Deadline for *Common Sense II*

Thursdays 2:00-5:00  
3rd Tuesday 6:30  
4th Monday 6:30  
1st Wednesday Noon  
3rd Wednesday 5:30  
May 6, 2022

DFL Headquarters  
DFL Headquarters  
Hybrid  
DFL Headquarters  
DFL Headquarters  
conray@arvig.net

# The Sad, Sorry State of the Earth

By Vicki Andrews

As we near the 52<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of Earth Day (April 22), a new report has been released by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). These reports provide governments with scientific information that they can use to develop climate policies. They also play a key role in international negotiations to tackle climate change. The panel of distinguished and respected scientists reviews thousands of scientific research papers and findings of over 200 scientists from 60 different countries. These reports should be taken very seriously.

The latest report indicates that carbon emissions from recent years have never been higher in human history and shows that the world is on a fast track to disaster, according to Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the UN. He goes on to state that unless action is taken soon, some major cities will be underwater and warns of the likelihood of “unprecedented heatwaves, terrifying storms, widespread water shortages, and the extinction of a million species of plants and animals.”

Last year seemed to be a record year for hurricanes, heatwaves, droughts, floods, and other weather disasters around the world. Don't forget the massive fires throughout California and other



<https://peoplesdispatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/>

Western states. Newscasters were even beginning to refer to climate change and global warming as likely causes of these disasters on their regular programs. It almost seemed as though we were finally getting the message. Our behavior, especially our callous and thoughtless treatment of nature is what is causing these on-going disasters. We haven't heard much over the winter, because as the world cools down, we don't see hurricanes, heatwaves, or floods, so we can relax a bit and stop worrying about what's happening. I haven't heard newscasters report much on climate change or global warming concerns over the winter months. We don't see hurricanes, tornadoes, and similar disasters in the winter, but summer is coming, and it's likely the cycle will begin again—probably more severe this year than last.

Now is the time we must take this very seriously. If we wait, it will really be too late to do much



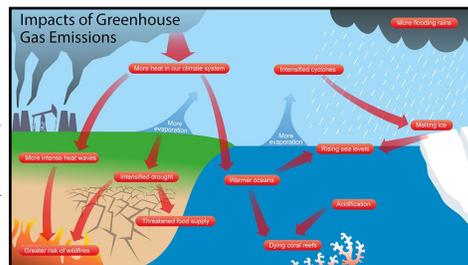
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<https://blog.cei.iscto-iul.pt/wp-content/>

about it, and we may well be the ones who pound the nail into the coffin of our Mother Earth. But there is still hope, according to the IPCC. In addition to the “sustainable and emissions-busting solutions that are available to governments,” the IPCC report

emphasized that “rethinking how cities function in the future could help significantly in mitigating the



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worst effects of climate change.” The report goes on to state that “these reductions can be achieved through lower energy consumption, electrification of transport in combination with low-emission energy sources, and enhanced carbon uptake and storage.”

IPCC Working Group III Co-chair Priyadarshi Shukla, insisted that “the right policies, infrastructure and technology...to enable changes to our lifestyles and behavior, can result in a 40-70% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.” To read the entire reports or to see other articles and opinion pieces about the recent UN climate report, check out major newspapers or go on-line. Search for information on the UN climate report and learn more. Then act in whatever way you can to raise awareness and make a difference. Change your lifestyle; connect with your senators and representatives; talk to your family and neighbors.

The Earth circle and Indivisible local groups (and others) will be on the Mississippi River Bridge on Pokegama Avenue from 3:00-4:00 pm on earth Day, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, and then will be on the south side of Central School from 4:00-5:00 with signs and more information about how you can help the Earth. Please join us if you can, or honk as you go by to show your support.



*COMMON SENSE II* is published by the Itasca Progressive Caucus in Grand Rapids, Minnesota

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