

# **Sustainable living**

## **How do we get there from here?**

### **Blessings**

All that any of us really have is mother earth beneath our feet, the air we breathe, the seeds of life which we nurture with the water from the clouds, the sun that shines over all of it producing all the energy we need to grow and go, and the wind that brings the cool breezes that refresh us.

We need all of these and these are all we need. Everything else is vanity and hubris.

### **Our Responsibility**

It is our responsibility to treasure and preserve these resources that sustain us.

For whatever we do to the air, the water, and the earth, we do also to the birds, the fish, and the animals. And ultimately, in the end, we do to ourselves.

The future is in our hands.

As Pogo has said, "We have met the enemy and he is us."

It is not for us to wait for government or corporations to act.

### **Corporations**

Corporations have done their part. They have produced the insulation, LED light bulbs, the electric cars, the solar panels, the inverters, and the copper wire necessary to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. It is incumbent upon us to buy these products and put them into service.

It is true, for example, that car manufacturers make far more gas cars than they do electric cars. But that is because more of us buy gas cars than buy electric cars.

It is true that oil companies are fracking on land and drilling and fracking offshore to retrieve petroleum products. But that is only because we demand those products to run our automobiles and for many other purposes.

We can drive to the beach in our SUVs and hold hands on the beach to protest offshore drilling. But the oil companies will satisfy our demand for fuel for SUVs and ignore our hand holding in protest on the beach.

The best way to stop drilling and fracking is to buy electric cars, either new or used, and stop consuming the fuel and lubricants the oil companies produce.

### **Government**

Government also has done their part. For anyone who installs a solar system, the federal government provides a 30% income tax credit. For anyone who purchases an electric car, the \$7,500 federal tax credit is available. There are also in many states, State and local incentives that make it economically attractive to purchase an electric car.



It is true that for some companies Federal tax credits begin to phase out at some time in the near future. It is important to remember that the federal government does not give money to individuals purchasing solar or electric cars. Such buyers are simply relieved of their tax obligation or a portion of it as an incentive for sustainable living.

## **Economics of Sustainable Living**

It is ironic that individuals who currently own or are planning to install a swimming pool when inquiring about the cost of a solar installation, respond by saying "Oh, I can't afford that."

A solar system is an asset producing revenue everyday equivalent to the value of the electricity it produces. A 5 KW Solar system in Florida produces on average \$2.50 per day worth of electricity.

A swimming pool, on the other hand, which costs more than twice the price of a solar system, is a liability. Money must be spent every day for chemicals and electricity to run the pump and often to heat the pool.



These individuals will often ask, what is the payback for the solar system? Of course there is a payback. Which varies depending on the economics of the situation. Sometimes it will be as little as 4 years and others it will be as much as 20. I wonder what the payback is on a swimming pool?

Similar questions are often asked about electric cars. What is the payback? Of course there is a payback. That depends again on your circumstances. For some the payback will be 6 years with typical use. For others who drive more miles per year the payback maybe sooner. Again in this case I wonder what the payback is on the typical gas car?



## Conclusion

We have not a problem to solve, but a task to complete!

Smokey the bear says, "Only you can prevent forest fires!" Perhaps someday he will say, "Only you can prevent climate change."

"A society grows great when old men plant trees in whose shade they know they shall never sit" – an ancient Greek proverb.

Perhaps a modern version of this proverb will be,

"A society grows great when old men install solar systems whose electricity they know they shall never use"



The novelist Warren Ellis once said, "the future sneaks up on us, in the fringes of daily life."

Today is only one day in all the days that will ever be. But what will happen in all the other days that ever come can depend on what you do today." -Ernest Hemingway