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Invest in the Earth This Earth Day and Every Day



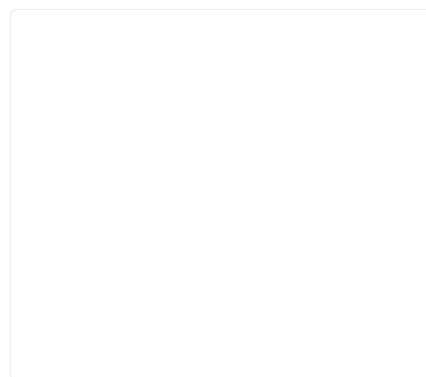
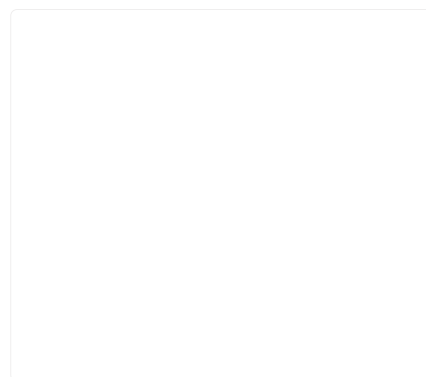
By [Gemma Alexander](#)

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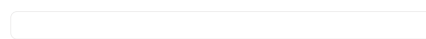
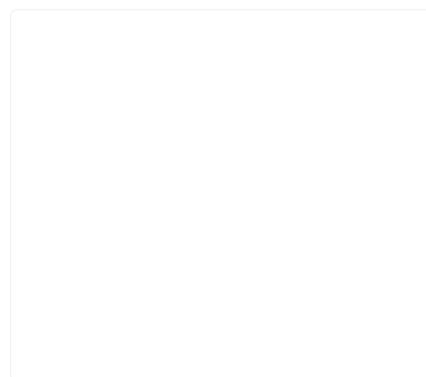


For years, we've been carefully sorting our recyclables and carrying reusable bags to the grocery store, while atmospheric carbon levels [continue to soar](#). Individual action is necessary to stop climate change, but it is not enough. Industry and governments must get on board. But at last year's climate change conference in Glasgow, one thing became apparent.

"Governments were not going to do it," says Kathleen Rogers, president and CEO of EarthDay.org. "It has long been governments telling people, 'Cut back, cut back, cut back' as if we're profligates and it's all our fault. Let's all turn our heat



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down to 55 because the government can't get its act together to invest the serious money we need in renewable energy."

Rogers notes that there are many reasons governments and businesses resist sustainability – election cycles that make long-term planning difficult, a global shift to the right in political thinking, economic uncertainty, and most recently, the COVID pandemic. But underlying all of these is the basic human tendency to fear change.

"Everyone is in love with the status quo," says Rogers, because we focus more on what we have to lose than on what we might gain.

Invest in the Earth

This year, EarthDay.org wants to draw everyone's attention to the ROI of investing in the Earth. Instead of focusing on the [37,000 jobs](#) that will disappear with the American coal industry, they want people to notice that [solar power](#) already employs 250,000 workers and is growing five times faster than the overall job growth rate in the U.S. A worldwide commitment to sustainability could revolutionize the global economy just as the space race spurred the rapid transition from an analog to a digital world in the 20th century, and industrialization introduced the modern era in the 19th.

"We have a chance to completely rethink everything, from what we're eating, to what we're wearing, to what we're sitting on, to our buildings and cars, everything. It's happening, but it could happen at lightning speed if we bring the companies in, if we bring in and celebrate and support the inventors, if we find a way to educate our kids and promote climate literacy," says Rogers.

Green Economy Triumvirate

Environmentalists have historically pitted themselves against industry in battles over pollution, habitat destruction, and environmental injustice.

"But the negativity isn't working. At this point, the enemy is not companies, it's inaction," says Rogers. And the kind of systemic change we need to address climate change cannot be implemented by any single sector without the cooperation of the others.

"Certainty in the marketplace often comes from governments," Rogers says. Governments need to implement incentives and policies that support innovative solutions rather than propping up old, polluting industries. In an economy obsessed with "disruption," investors and entrepreneurs need to recognize that sustainability is the disruptive new model we need, with tremendous opportunity in regenerative agriculture, renewable

energy, and carbon capture. As citizens, individuals need to vote for green candidates and pressure their representatives to take environmental action. As consumers, individuals need to demand sustainable products.



The kind of systemic change we need to address climate change cannot be implemented by any single sector without the cooperation of the others. We need government, business, and consumer sectors all on board.

Earth Day Every Day

Earth Day is April 22. But EarthDay.org works year-round with campaigns that help people invest in the Earth as individuals, at work and at the polls.

[Climate Literacy](#)

The industrial revolution led to mandated K-12 education. The space race generated an investment in STEM. The green economy will depend on climate and environmental science education with a strong civic component. After decades of providing nonformal education, EarthDay.org is campaigning for compulsory, assessed [climate literacy education](#) around the world.

[Eliminating Plastic](#)

Although it's an incredibly useful material, plastic is a petroleum product whose manufacture contributes to climate change. Because it is not biodegradable and [rarely recycled](#), plastic is a mounting [pollution problem](#) with potentially severe human and ecosystem health impacts. The [Great Global Cleanup](#) aims to remove billions of pieces of trash in local cleanup events every day of the year around the world. Their plastic pollution campaign addresses individual and systematic problems of plastic use.

[Sustainable Business](#)

It can be hard to envision how the triumvirate of government, business, and consumer can revolutionize an industry for the green economy. This year, EarthDay.org is focusing on [fashion](#) as both an example and a place to begin making a difference. Fashion for the Earth is designed to change how people think about shopping, and to encourage clothing companies to adopt more sustainable practices.

[The Canopy Project](#)

The ongoing [Canopy Project](#) plants trees around the globe. In contrast to many tree-planting initiatives, the Canopy Project recognizes the economic pressures that lead to deforestation and its community impacts. Working with local partners, they help create access to alternative fuels and jobs. The project is also beginning to emphasize the importance of [urban tree cover](#) for habitat, [carbon sequestration](#), and reducing the [heat island effect](#).

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By [Gemma Alexander](#)

Gemma Alexander has an M.S. in urban horticulture and a backyard filled with native plants. After working in a genetics laboratory and at a landfill, she now writes about the environment, the arts and family. See more of her writing [here](#).

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