

FROM GLOBAL POLLUTER TO GLOBAL COOLER

by
Thea Holm

Walking into any book shop these days, you will find a well stocked shelf with books dedicated to the Green Living and Environment topics. There is an urgency all over the world to tell people how to change their life styles and make their own CO2 foot print smaller.

The message in Al Gore's movie 'An Inconvenient Truth' gives us a cut off date of 2050, George Monbiot's book 'Heat' tells us it is 2030; the date when the earth will reach the snowball effect, which means whatever we do after that date, will have no impact on reversing our negative contribution; it won't help anymore.....

Never before have scientists all over the world been so split up over an issue like this one. Some say that human generated CO2 are not the culprit of global warming and some laugh it away, saying that we all are doom prophets; it's a natural process which happened many times before during earth's existence. My question: Have humans been there before? How can the perfect equilibrium that was there, this closed cycle where trees could neutralize the CO2 in the atmosphere, not being disturbed when we cut down millions of hectare tropical forests per year that need to do this work, plus send tons and tons more CO2 in the atmosphere with our industries, our air-, sea- and land transport? Anyone can make this simple calculation.....

Let us focus a bit closer to home, the South African contribution to climate change (it does not sound as bad as global warming, does it?).

South Africa is in the top 10 of the world's biggest polluters and takes the no. 1 position in Africa! Our government continuously seizes this opportunity to stand with cupped hands in front of the developed world telling them to give, because it is all their fault and we will suffer because they started the industrialized world! The dilemma is that in future $\frac{3}{4}$ of the world's emissions will come from emerging economies.

In the previous article we learned what positive impact trees can have on our polluting problem, but even the organization "Trees for the Future" are straight forward on the question: Won't energy efficiency save us? The answer is NO, we will have to do a lot more, we need to become pro-active.

Remember the scare we got in the 80's, when the news broke that there is a hole in the ozone layer? (We soon learned what CFC's meant). Although 40 countries signed the Montreal Protocol in 1988 to reduce CFC's in products, **THE CONCENTRATIONS OF CFC'S IN THE ATMOSPHERE ARE INCREASING BY ABOUT 4% PER YEAR.** Even if this protocol is fully observed, most CFC's are long-lived and the ozone won't stabilize before 2060.

But let's focus more closer to home, to a street address somewhere in Rustenburg. I hope that by this time you are desperately looking for the place where you can start contributing to cooling down this hot topic.

How about in your kitchen, that stuff that lands in the black bag and as soon as we make a knot in it, becomes someone else's problem. We say we throw it away..... but where is away? Away is **somewhere**, there is no place like away!

Statistics on refuse in South Africa from 2003:

- 90% of waste goes to landfill
- We generate 566 million tons of waste per year
- It costs our country R100 million per year to clean up this waste
- Methane gas (generated from land fills) are 21 times more dangerous than CO2

Pecanwood College, a school on the south-western side of Hartbeespoort, is a member of an International Environmental Program that is integrated into their school syllabus. In 2005 their Eco Committee successfully started a Recycle Centre on the school's premises, open to the public. This created a need for more recycle points, residents living far away from the school started showing interest in recycling. We started collecting names as our aim was to start a Household Recycling Program, making it just as easy to put out recyclable items, than it is to put out the black bag that goes to the landfill site.

We are so happy to announce that we started this program running in May this year and the total of households that joined, grew with more than 100% in the first 3 months; people are still joining by the week!. We even got Housing Estates (which Hartbeespoort has a lot of) enthusiastic about this and they created drop off points at their entrances to make the access for the collector so much easier. Our own household uses the school's drop off point and before starting to recycle, we were very conscious of the three R's: Reduce, Re-use and Recycle (which came last into place) and we sent a black bag per week to the landfill site. Now, after becoming a recycler, we send one black bag to landfill every 5 weeks! After recycling paper, plastic, tins, glass, polystyrene, plastics, tetra packs and organic material, I can tell you there's not much left for the ugly old black bag!

We already have a very enthusiastic high school in Rustenburg ready to erect the first Recycle Depot at a school! We would thus like to encourage you, the home owner, if you would like to become a recycler of your own household's waste, send us your details by sms or e-mail. We would also like to hear from anybody out there who collects recyclables (or would like to start this as a small enterprise) and the big Recycle Companies that are already active in Rustenburg and the area, maybe only servicing industries, but who would consider buying from the Recycle Collector, to contact **Thea Holm on 082 824 8340 or tholm@omnibusolar.com**