

Editor, Times-Dispatch:

Regarding the editorial entitled "Earth Day" (Sunday, 4/22/01), I feel compelled to share a few thoughts. First, it seems a bit antagonistic to choose this particular occasion to bash those who are legitimately concerned with our "leadership's" position on environmental policy. Granted, there is no shortage of whining from the extreme fringes; in fact, these groups, while making their point loud and (mostly) clear, tend to do more harm than good through the rhetoric intended to gain the undivided attention of the current administration. However, I believe that the majority of concerned citizens simply expect actions to be taken with an eye toward what's best for the health of the country and the planet on a sustained basis, not with an eye toward the political climate over next eight years. In your conclusion, you write, "Believe it or not, President Bush really does not want to destroy the planet...He has some innovative ideas on how the environment and the economy can peacefully co-exist." P-lease. I assume that, since we've not heard otherwise, you are referring to "innovations" such as solving the energy problem with 'solutions' like opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for business. What about shifting that focus to catching up with the rest of the developed world community by promoting renewable sources (solar, wind, hydro, etc.) as viable technologies that take the burden off of further exploration and extraction of finite and rapidly dwindling resources? Unfortunately, given the predilections and conflicts of interest influencing policy-making at the top rungs of our government, this is a painfully idealistic proposition. I agree that Dubya does not intend to trash the planet. But, as the leader of a country that gulps down

some 25% of global resources annually with only about 5% of its population, it is utterly absurd that we haven't seen any follow-through on campaign promises (at minimum) or alternatives to ratification of the Kyoto protocols, other than "clean coal" R&D.

This may come as a surprise, but the U.S. is not held in very high esteem by its foreign counterparts as it pertains to energy and other environmental issues. In fact, as alluded to earlier, we are embarrassingly behind the curve in efforts to curb emissions by gradually supplanting the dirty old technologies with clean, sustainable ones. If our president were truly innovative, he would see the nearly limitless opportunities that arise from the practical stewardship of the interdependence between economic vitality and ecological health. He and his ilk refer to this relationship as though these are two realms best treated as rivals who need a dose of good 'ole American diplomacy to bring them into agreement. The reality, whether any of us want to believe it, is that abundance of financial capital ultimately relies directly upon the supply and viability of natural capital. An impressive number of people and businesses, including governments, around the globe recognize this and are capitalizing on it with great success, and in many cases, demonstrating practices that are actually restorative while simultaneously profitable. Unfortunately, if our President has his way, we will continue, with business as usual, to draw down our collective savings account while ignoring untapped sources of perpetual income. Happy Earth Day.