

## **Going Green Is Easier Than You Think**

**By Nancy Reigel**

In last week's inaugural "MountainKeeping" article, we read about eco-footprints. We learned that if the entire world's population used as much of its resources as the citizens of the US, we would need five planets to support us all. That got my attention. As more and more of the Third World gets running water, this "five-times requirement" could become a reality very quickly. But where are those other five earths?

And just what do we do about such a huge problem?

Well, the "what" we should do is rather straightforward: we need either to use less of our planet's non-renewable resources or create more. Which of those is more feasible? Looks like the most practical approach is to change our habits or approaches to how we do things to use less ... less water, less fossil fuel, less of the other resources we cannot readily regenerate. The idea is to use without using up.

Is anyone doing anything about it? The answer is yes, and even better, much is being done right here in the High Country. Here is but a bare sampling of positive steps being taken in our own community.

Our own Boone Town Council has expressed a vision of a "green" city. "Green" in this context means the bringing our use of non-renewable resources back into balance with what the earth can sustain (use without using up), all the while slowing the damage to our atmosphere. Consistent with this vision, the Town has applied for and received a grant to collect rainwater that will be used to wash municipal vehicles, a great way to use precious water that otherwise would just run off. The Council has endorsed a Zero Waste initiative, to reduce the amount of solid waste being trucked to landfills far away, thus also and incidentally reducing the amount of fuel needed to move our trash around. The Council has also agreed to consider changing some ordinances to allow the planned new high school to use cistern-collected water for flushing.

Which brings us to the County Commission and the plans for the new high school. Along with a system for using cistern-water for flushing, the commissioners have envisioned a "green" school: day-lighting, timer-based heating and cooling, low-heat lights, a general reduction of water and energy use.

Everyday citizens are also playing a part. Many residents in the high country grow their own vegetables or patronize our excellent Farmers Market. There are also community gardens popping up around Boone and the county. How does this help? Food that is grown here does not have to be trucked up the mountain. Not trucking up the mountain means less fossil fuel per bite. Tastes better, too.

Finally, one very easy and satisfying first step any Blue Ridge Electric customer can make is to agree to purchase a block of renewable energy. For \$4 a month, you can underwrite the extra cost it takes to produce 1 KW of electricity from a renewable energy source (wind, solar, etc.). I tried it and found it easier than holiday shopping and more satisfying. I logged on to [www.blueridgeemc.com/greenpower](http://www.blueridgeemc.com/greenpower), clicked on the Green Power link, and signed up. Try it and see how easy “green” can be.