

Environmental Policy: Governments, Corporations, NGOs

Effective public action requires clarifying the ethical presumptions of environmental policy and implementing these presumptions. In this chapter we examine the involvement of governments, corporations, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in this process.

Governments: International and US Policies

Protecting the environment requires effective action at all levels of government. After summing up international environmental policy, we consider the National Environmental Policy Act of the United States and actions taken by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

International

Chapters 7 and 9 discussed reports and treaties sponsored by the UN that define environmental policy and create enforcement mechanisms. These include:

- UN Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm Declaration, 1972)
- UN Environment Programme (UNEP, 1972)
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, in force 1976)
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, in force 1976)
- Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer (1985)
- UN World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Report, 1987)
- Montreal Protocol on Substances That Deplete the Ozone Layer (added to the Vienna Convention, 1991)
- Agenda 21 of the Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit, 1992)¹
- Commission on Sustainable Development (1992)
- Environmental Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (1992)
- Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC, in force 1994)
- Kyoto Protocol to the FCCC (2005)

On the basis of these instruments, international law affirms that all governments and citizens have a duty to support public actions that will (1) realize the right to environmentally sustainable development, (2) protect the right of every person to a healthy environment, and (3) maintain the integrity of the environment for future generations. Of these three moral and legal presumptions, the first two derive our duties from rights, and the third asserts a duty on the basis of our character and our relationships with our ancestors and descendants.

In addition, these international instruments assert that developed countries have a duty to assist developing countries in mitigating carbon emissions and adapting to the adverse consequences of climate change. This reflects the ethical argument that nations bearing a greater responsibility for creating a global problem have a greater responsibility for addressing it. Where there has been an inequity, those who caused it and benefited more

¹ | Text from Chapter 10 of *Doing Environmental Ethics* by Robert Traer (Westview Press, 2013).

from it have an added responsibility (as well as more of the resources necessary) to redress it.

In 2009 the UN Climate Change Conference produced what is known as the Copenhagen Accord, which reaffirms prior international agreements to reduce carbon emissions but lacks legally binding commitments by the participating countries. Nonetheless, the Accord did include the pledge that developed countries would raise hundreds of billions of dollars to assist developing countries in reducing carbon emissions. The UN Climate Change Conference meeting in Cancun in 2010 took steps to establish a Green Climate Fund to oversee this transfer of resources from developed to developing countries.

In December 2011 in Durban, South Africa, the UN Climate Change Conference reaffirmed its commitment to a Green Climate Fund, but without obtaining any commitments from developed nations. It also extended the Kyoto Protocol for five years, through 2017, and stated that a successor to the protocol “with legal force” would be negotiated by 2015.

China, India, and the United States refused to agree to more specific language. The head of the Chinese delegation in Durban, Xie Zhenhua, accused developed countries of being hypocritical. “What qualifies you to tell us what to do?” he said. “We are taking action. We want to see your action.”² A week after the Durban conference, Canada officially ended its participation in the Kyoto Protocol.

Policies of the United States

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) defines the duties of the federal government for the environment. Its purposes are: “To declare a national policy which will encourage productive and enjoyable harmony between man and his environment; to promote efforts which will prevent or eliminate damage to the environment and biosphere and stimulate the health and welfare of man; to enrich the understanding of the ecological systems and natural resources important to the Nation; and to establish a Council on Environmental Quality.”³

Title I of the act states that its purposes require the federal government to act in order to:

1. Fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations.
2. Assure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings.
3. Attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences.
4. Preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage, and maintain, wherever possible, an environment that supports diversity and variety of individual choice.
5. Achieve a balance between population and resource use that will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life’s amenities.
6. Enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.

Title I of NEPA requires all federal agencies to consider the environmental impact of their activities and, if this impact is likely to be significant, to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS). On April 22, 1970, twenty million Americans participated in the first Earth

Day, and that July President Nixon submitted to Congress a proposal to create an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that would consolidate the environmental programs of other federal agencies.⁴

The initial focus of the EPA was pollution, and passage of the Clean Air Act of 1970 (CAA) gave the EPA the power to regulate the emissions of pollutants. The act brought about dramatic and substantive changes in the federal air quality program. It required the EPA to establish national air quality standards as well as national standards for significant new pollution sources and for all facilities emitting hazardous substances. It took aim against America's leading source of pollution, the automobile.⁵

Legislation during the 1970s also directed the EPA to set and enforce clean water standards. The EPA initially pursued an enforcement strategy that threatened court action, if compliance was not forthcoming, but in the 1990s it began to rely more on incentive programs. In collaboration with the Department of Energy, in 1992 the EPA began Energy Star, a voluntary-labeling program that promotes the use of energy-efficient products to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Energy Star label now identifies a variety of products using less energy and also new homes and commercial buildings. The EPA reports that the program resulted in savings of nearly \$18 billion in 2010.⁶

In 2001 the EPA launched the Green Power Partnership program, which encourages organizations to buy renewable energy. The EPA defines green power as "electricity produced by solar, wind, geothermal, biogas, biomass, and low-impact small hydroelectric sources."⁷ The EPA website provides a locator to help consumers find the closest source of green power, and the partnership program presents awards to exemplary users.

In 1980 Congress passed the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), which is commonly known as the Superfund law. The EPA administers this fund to clean up hazardous waste sites that have been abandoned and pose a threat to communities. As of December 2011, there were almost thirteen hundred sites on the National Priority List. CERCLA authorizes the government to order "potentially responsible parties" to clean up sites and levy fines for noncompliance.⁸

In 2003, under the George W. Bush administration, the head of the EPA ruled that the Clean Air Act did not authorize the EPA to regulate carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. This prompted a lawsuit by twelve states, over a dozen nongovernmental organizations, and a few cities. Early in 2007 the US Supreme Court, in *Massachusetts v. Environmental Protection Agency*, held that the EPA "has the authority to regulate heat-trapping gases in automobile emissions. The court further ruled that the agency could not sidestep its authority to regulate the greenhouse gases that contribute to global climate change unless it could provide a scientific basis for its refusal."⁹

In 2011 the Obama administration announced an EPA rule for new power plants, entitled "Greenhouse Gas New Source Performance Standard for Electric Utility Steam Generating Units."¹⁰ Also in 2011, the Obama administration withdrew a proposed EPA regulation that would have reduced concentrations of ground-level ozone, the main ingredient in smog. The EPA, whose scientific advisers recommended the tighter limits, had estimated that implementing the regulation might cost US businesses \$90 billion a year. The Clean Air Act does not permit the EPA to consider the costs of complying with a health standard, but

Obama acknowledged that his decision was intended to reduce the burden of regulation on businesses in a time of great economic uncertainty.

In addition, the Obama administration recommended to the UN that the World Bank manage the Green Climate Fund to assist developing countries with reducing carbon emissions. This recommendation has been opposed by environmental NGOs, because the World Bank recently loaned South Africa \$3.75 billion to construct what will be one of the world's largest coal-burning power plants.¹¹

Corporations: Sustainable Practices

Corporations lobby legislatures and government agencies about laws and the administrative rules for environmental policies and also influence the election and appointment of public officials who make and administer public policies. Many corporations, however, have formulated environmental policies about sustainable business practices. These corporations have been persuaded largely by consequential arguments that conserving energy and reducing waste also reduces costs and increases profits.

Interface, Inc.

A global carpet manufacturer, Interface, has committed to operating on 100 percent renewable energy by 2020. As of 2010, eight of its nine factories were using 100 percent renewable electricity, and 30 percent of the company's total energy use was from renewable sources.¹² Since 1996 the company has reduced the greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) from its operations by 35 percent. In 2004 it was awarded the EPA's Climate Protection Award for producing the world's first carbon neutral carpet.

Interface has applied the lessons of *biomimicry* (using nature as a model) to develop sustainable solutions. For instance, inspired by the many examples in nature of adhesion, the company has developed a carpet tile installation system using small adhesive squares to connect carpet without the need for glue.

Interface defines waste as "any cost that does not produce value to customers. This includes everything from scrap materials and defective products to misdirected shipments or incorrect invoices."¹³ Waste reduction efforts have been extended to include the entire supply chain, and since 1996 these efforts have led to a 76 percent decrease in total waste to landfills.

In 2007 Interface became the first carpet manufacturer to implement a process for the clean separation of carpet fiber from backing, allowing for a maximum amount of postconsumer material to be recycled into new products with minimal contamination. The company has also decreased its use of water per unit of product by 82 percent.

Interface has planted more than 118,000 trees to neutralize the carbon emissions from business-related air travel since this program started in 1997. The company also matches employee contributions to purchase tree plantings that neutralize carbon emissions from their commutes. Nearly 45,000 trees have been planted since this program began in 2002.

To measure its progress in meeting its environmental goals, Interface relies on Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs)—third-party-verified reports on product ingredients and environmental impacts that occur during the manufacture and life of a product. EPDs are based on a life cycle assessment (LCA), which details the

environmental impact of making, using, and disposing of a product. EPDs consider raw material extraction, energy use, water use, and waste generation.¹⁴

How did Interface become so committed to environmental sustainability? In 1994 Interface founder and chairman Ray C. Anderson had what he called an “epiphany” while reading Paul Hawken’s *The Ecology of Commerce*.¹⁵ Today, Interface is not only a leader in its industry, but offers a sustainability consulting service to other companies.¹⁶

Before he died in August 2011, Anderson urged economists to stop underestimating the true cost of doing business by excluding externalities from their accounting, such as damage to the environment from pollution. Moreover, he argued that governments should raise the gasoline tax (while cutting income taxes and providing subsidies for the poor) so the increase in the price of gasoline would both drive low-carbon innovation in transportation and motivate people to drive less. These changes in US tax policy, Anderson believed, would bring about a significant reduction in carbon dioxide emissions.¹⁷

Procter and Gamble (P&G)

In 2010 P&G established the following long-term environmental sustainability goals:

- Using 100 percent renewable or recycled materials for all products and packaging.
- Powering P&G plants with 100 percent renewable energy.
- Delivering effluent water quality that is as good as or better than influent water quality, with no contribution to water scarcity.
- Having zero manufacturing and consumer waste go to landfills.¹⁸

On its web page entitled “Our Long-Term Vision and 2020 Goals,” P&G defines a *renewable* resource as “produced by natural processes at a rate comparable to its rate of consumption.” In addition to using materials that are renewably sourced, P&G is committed to ensuring that these materials are sustainable. By *sustainable* materials it means that “their production will not result in the destruction of critical ecosystems, loss of habitat for endangered species, or other detrimental impacts on the environment or human communities.”

P&G has pledged to ensure sustainable water management by both its operations and the consumer use of its products. This commitment includes goals for water reduction, use of new technologies, product innovation using an LCA, and siting decisions using a watershed approach, “which looks holistically at water supply where a plant could be built.” It is also clear about reducing waste: “Our vision is to have all manufacturing waste end up in a valued waste stream (e.g., recycling, repurposing, waste-to-energy without toxic emissions).”¹⁹

P&G also is exceptionally transparent in describing how its “holistic view of technology” and its understanding of consumers support its commitment to sustainable manufacturing. By utilizing “Life Cycle thinking” the company can assess a product’s entire environmental footprint, from procuring raw materials, to the product’s use, to its final disposal.

In the case of laundry detergent, for example, this assessment revealed that optimizing the detergent for use in cold water would provide the greatest environmental benefit, because heating the water for washing was the highest energy use in the life cycle of the product.

To make this change in consumer behavior, P&G advertised the cost and energy savings of washing clothes in cold water.

In its Sustainability Report for 2011, P&G notes that since July 2002 it has reduced its energy use and carbon dioxide emissions by over 50 percent, as well as its waste disposal and water usage by about 60 percent. In addition, it has saved 20,000 lives by delivering four billion liters of clean water through its safe drinking water program. Remarkably, its products touch the lives of over four billion people.²⁰

In 2010 P&G issued its first environmental sustainability supplier scorecard, which tracks improvements by its suppliers in areas such as energy, water, waste, greenhouse gas emissions, and innovation. In 2011 P&G made this sustainability scorecard for its suppliers mandatory.²¹ To ensure transparency in its accountability, P&G follows the Global Reporting Initiative's (GRI) G3 Guidelines, an international set of reporting standards.²²

Walmart

In 2005 Walmart, which has long been criticized by NGOs for its lack of environmental responsibility,²³ hired the former head of the Sierra Club, Adam Wehrbach, to oversee its sustainability program. By 2008 Walmart had explained sustainability to its 1.4 million associates (employees) and encouraged each to make a Personal Sustainability Promise (PSP) that would benefit the earth. "It could be a decision to carpool, to plant trees, to eat organic food, to recycle—anything that might reduce pollution and waste and raise environmental awareness."²⁴

Critics argued that Walmart needed to enforce sustainability standards on its supply chain and not simply motivate its workers to reduce their ecological footprints. So in 2007 Walmart entered into an agreement with the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP), an independent NGO that oversees the world's largest database of corporate climate change information. By 2009 Walmart was asking its 100,000 suppliers to complete a Supplier Sustainability Assessment (SSA), which in 2011 was more than thirty pages long and included the following questions:

Energy and Climate

1. Have you measured and taken steps to reduce your corporate GHG emissions?
2. Have you opted to report your GHG emissions and climate change strategy to the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP)?
3. What are your total annual GHG emissions in the most recent year measured?
4. Have you set publicly available GHG reduction targets? If yes, what are those targets?
5. Material Efficiency
6. (Scores will be automatically calculated based on participation in the Packaging Scorecard in addition to the following.)
7. If measured, please report total amount of solid waste generated from the facilities that produce your product(s) for Walmart for the most recent year measured.
8. Have you set publicly available solid waste reduction targets? If yes, what are those targets?
9. If measured, please report total water use from the facilities that produce your product(s) for Walmart for the most recent year measured.

10. Have you set publicly available water use reduction targets? If yes, what are those targets?
11. Nature and Resources
12. Have you established publicly available sustainability purchasing guidelines for your direct suppliers that address issues such as environmental compliance, employment practices, and product/ingredient safety?
13. Have you obtained third-party certifications for any of the products that you sell to Walmart?
14. People and Community
15. Do you know the location of 100 percent of the facilities that produce your product(s)?
16. Before beginning a business relationship with a manufacturing facility, do you evaluate its quality of production and capacity for production?
17. Do you have a process for managing social compliance at the manufacturing level?
18. Do you work with your supply base to resolve issues found during social compliance evaluations and also document specific corrections and improvements?
19. Do you invest in community development activities in the markets you source from and/or operate within?

Walmart asserts that these questions are about creating business value and that “being a profitable business goes hand-in-hand with being a good steward of the planet and people.” Although completing the SSA is not mandatory, Walmart expects its suppliers to cooperate.²⁵

Is this comprehensive assessment tool making any difference? Using 2005 as a baseline for greenhouse gas emissions, the company reports that by 2009 it had achieved a 10.6 percent reduction toward its goal of a 20 percent reduction by 2012.²⁶ Using 2007 as a baseline, the company achieved a 21 percent (47.95 million pounds) reduction in plastic bag waste in its global operations by 2010. That same year, monitoring in California showed an overall 80 percent reduction in waste, and in the United Kingdom more than two hundred stores realized Walmart’s sustainability objective of producing zero waste.²⁷

Concerns remain about Walmart, despite its success in cutting energy use, GHG emissions, and solid waste. Critics believe that Walmart’s “new green-washed image is deflecting attention from the drag the company continues to inflict on workers’ wages and communities’ quality of life.”²⁸ Its enormous buying power can force suppliers to adopt more sustainable practices, but that same bargaining power lowers wages in the retail industry, coerces local governments into lowering taxes, and drives smaller retail operations out of business.

JPMorgan Chase

The environmental sustainability policy of JPMorgan Chase states: “In addition to investing in and arranging financing for emerging clean energy technologies, the firm is also committed to managing the resource use in its operations with a view to sustainable use of energy, paper, and responsible practices, such as green building, recycling, and water conservation.”²⁹

Under the heading “Principles Guiding Our Business,” JPMorgan Chase affirms the Equator Principles, which provide a framework for evaluating the environmental and social

risks involved in financing transactions in emerging markets. These principles concern projects with a total capital cost of \$10 million or more.³⁰ The Equator Principles require that JPMorgan Chase make an annual report on its progress in implementing these principles.³¹

JPMorgan Chase has also endorsed the Carbon Principles, a framework for assessing investment in companies generating power, such as coal-fired power plants. These principles require an Enhanced Diligence Process, which includes assessing GHG emissions likely to result from financing a development. JPMorgan Chase states that: “Due to the uncertainties around many of these factors, the Enhanced Diligence Process will encourage consideration of assumptions that err on the side of caution until more clarity on these issues is available to developers, lenders and investors.”³²

Nevertheless, a 2010 report by the Rainforest Action Network finds no evidence that support for these Carbon Principles—by JPMorgan Chase and other financial institutions—has “stopped, or even slowed, financing to carbon-intensive projects” or “spurred investment in clean energy at greater levels than what is already happening across the economy.”³³

JPMorgan Chase participates in the United Nations Environment Programme-Financial Institutions (UNEP-FI) and the United Nations for Responsible Investment (UNRI), as well as the Carbon Disclosure Project.³⁴ It also states that it “is proud to be a major participant in the global market for emission reductions established by the Kyoto Protocol.”³⁵ The corporation has pledged to reduce its GHG emissions 20 percent by 2012 in comparison with 2005, and is offsetting 100 percent of the emissions from the firm’s air travel with carbon credits.

The company is also reducing waste and increasing recycling in its Go Green campaign. Since 2007 it has eliminated more than 140 million documents (weighing four million pounds), and in 2010, 87 percent of all the paper used by JPMorgan Chase was made from sustainably managed forest products.

Its renewable energy portfolio includes sixty-seven wind farms representing over 6,500 megawatts of capacity located in eighteen states, and thirteen solar installations, including twelve solar photovoltaic projects and the Nevada Solar One, a 64 megawatt solar facility. Its independent subsidiary, EcoSecurities, oversees the world’s largest portfolio of emission reduction projects in compliance with the European Union’s Emission Trading Scheme. The company has also pledged to encourage *environmental stewardship* among its suppliers.³⁶

The bottom line, in ethics as in economics, is implementation, but the environmental policies of JPMorgan Chase demonstrate that corporations may affirm environmental stewardship as intrinsically right as well as profitable.

Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs): Advocacy and Action

Familiar NGOs that are taking environmental actions and lobbying for sustainable government and corporate policies include Greenpeace,³⁷ the Sierra Club,³⁸ the World Wildlife Fund (WWF),³⁹ and The Nature Conservancy (TNC).⁴⁰ There are, of course, other large environmental NGOs and tens of thousands of smaller groups involved in environmental advocacy.⁴¹

Greenpeace

The Greenpeace annual report for 2010–2011 includes this mission statement: “Greenpeace is the leading independent campaigning organization that uses peaceful protest and creative communication to expose global and environmental problems and to promote solutions that are essential to a green and peaceful future.”⁴²

Greenpeace affirms five “core values”:

Bearing witness: To environmental destruction in a peaceful, nonviolent manner. It’s an old Quaker tradition, and we made it a core element of our work from the beginning.

Nonviolence: It’s the reason companies and governments respect us; it’s the reason our supporters give us their trust; it’s non-negotiable.

Independence: We do not accept money from either companies or governments. Individual contributions, together with foundations grants, are the only source of our funding.

No permanent friends or foes: If your government or company is willing to change, we will work with you to achieve your aims. What matters is the environment has to benefit.

Promoting solutions: We don’t work to manage environmental problems; we work to eliminate them.⁴³

The first three of these core values may be understood as “character virtues.” They concern a way of acting with integrity and respect for all others. The last two core values affirm the NGO’s commitment to practical actions that will result in beneficial consequences.

Greenpeace USA is demanding that decision-makers develop energy policies based on science and innovation, not on the interests of profit-minded corporations and their lobbying groups. The goal is to move the world “away from oil, nuclear power, and coal, and toward a clean and renewable energy future.” The Greenpeace USA website is devoted to local actions and videos about these actions. The “What We Do” menu clarifies that for Greenpeace, “Our only bottom line is a green and peaceful future.”

The Sierra Club

The Sierra Club website has an “About” menu that welcomes the visitor and then suggests: “You’re here because, like 1.4 million of your friends and neighbors, you want: a safe and healthy community in which to live, smart energy solutions to combat global warming, an enduring legacy for America’s wild places.”

The mission of the Sierra Club is as follows:

- To explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the earth.
- To practice and promote the responsible use of the earth’s ecosystems and resources.
- To educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment.
- To use all lawful means to carry out these objectives.

The first statement reflects the emphasis of John Muir, who founded the Sierra Club in 1892 to defend the wilderness against logging and other commercial uses. The second

statement broadens the mission of the Sierra Club to include conserving the earth's resources, as we use them, by responsibly managing ecosystems. In the third statement, Muir's concern for the natural environment is joined with a commitment to protect the human environment. All four statements affirm the duties that constitute the mission of the Sierra Club.

A "Goals" menu lists the following: beyond coal, beyond oil, resilient habitats, protecting America's waters, youth and diversity, and natural gas reform. The first four of these goals seem obvious, but the last two are less so. The website clarifies that the Sierra Club "values diversity in our members, staff and supporters," and embraces "these differences, including race, class and ethnicity among many others." The natural gas reform sought by the Sierra Club involves making sure "natural gas companies are subject to additional scrutiny and strong national and state safeguards that protect our air, water, and communities."

The Sierra Club website offers a wide variety of actions and also lists chapters in every state. Chapters offer opportunities for hikes and other outings, as well as participation in actions related to local and state issues. Possible outings include inner-city adventures for urban youth, as well as more than three hundred trips in the United States or abroad.

The 2010 annual report bears the striking title, "Healthy People. Healthy Planet." Rather than emphasizing a preservation strategy, it features community partnership programs. In the northern Virginia area, with the support of the Sierra Club and other organizations, the Military Housing Energy Efficiency Project (MHEEP) has been able to provide job training to veterans and at the same time has completed free home energy upgrades for men and women on active duty.

In Louisiana the Sierra Club helped the Houma Tribe recover from the devastating impact of the BP oil disaster. In Detroit it supported efforts by largely African American members of a neighborhood suffering from lead and mercury poisoning from a nearby incinerator. Working together, they have started two recycling centers and initiated curbside recycling, as a way of creating jobs while reducing the waste being collected and burned in the incinerator.⁴⁴

These programs utilize reasoning that combines a sense of duty to preserve the earth's ecosystems with concerns for the well-being of citizens who are at risk economically as well as environmentally. As an ethical argument, it reflects a relationship approach to achieving both healthier people and a healthier environment. The Sierra Club also addresses issues of environmental justice by asserting the right to democracy, the right to participate, the right to equal protection, the right to know, the right to equity, the right to generational equity, and the rights of native peoples.⁴⁵

In 1971 the Sierra Club launched the Legal Defense Fund, which six years later became Earthjustice, a nonprofit public interest law firm dedicated to protecting "the magnificent places, natural resources, and wildlife of this earth and to defending the right of all people to a healthy environment."⁴⁶ Ethically, this is the rights strategy of the Sierra Club.

In 2006 the Sierra Club and the United Steelworkers Union created the BlueGreen Alliance (BGA), and its members now include other environmental NGOs and labor unions.⁴⁷ The

BGA unites almost fifteen million members and supporters committed to good jobs in a green economy. More specifically, the goals of the BGA are to:

- Pass legislation that will reduce carbon emissions and create jobs.
- Restore the rights of US workers to organize and bargain collectively.
- Enforce environmental and human rights standards in trade agreements.
- Protect workers and communities from toxic chemicals.⁴⁸

The BGA supports a healthy environment for workers. It opposes exporting waste to avoid recycling costs in the United States, because this adds to unemployment here and supports unhealthy environments in the receiving countries. Scrap metal shipped to developing countries creates unhealthy jobs there in highly polluting smelters. Millions of tons of scrap plastic sent to Asia are being recycled under dangerous working conditions or dumped in toxic landfills.⁴⁹

The BGA points to research substantiating the claim that investing in “building retrofits, mass transit and freight rail, wind and solar power, next generation biofuels and a smart grid transmission system” would create four times as many jobs as the same investment in expanding the nation’s oil supply. This green investment would also create three times the number of good jobs (paying \$16 or more) as the same investment in oil.⁵⁰

World Wildlife Fund

The WWF was founded in 1961 in Europe. It now supports activities in one hundred countries and has 1.2 million members in the United States and about 5 million globally. The WWF’s current website states its mission as “to conserve nature and reduce the most pressing threats to the diversity of life on Earth.”

More specifically, the WWF is committed to conserving fifteen of the world’s most ecologically important regions, by working in partnership with others to:

- Protect and restore species and their habitats.
- Strengthen local communities’ ability to conserve the natural resources they depend upon.
- Transform markets and policies to reduce the impact of the production and consumption of commodities.
- Mobilize hundreds of millions of people to support conservation.⁵¹

The WWF states unequivocally that all its conservation work is grounded in science. Its ethical argument emphasizes our duty to protect endangered species. For instance, it argues for working to stop climate change by asserting that: “Wildlife already suffers from human actions, such as deforestation and poaching. Climate change creates added stress on animals.”⁵²

The WWF partners with companies to reduce their carbon emissions, and in the past decade these corporate partners have reduced their GHG emissions by more than fifty million tons.⁵³ It has also influenced business practices in other ways. Jim Fushetti, who was managing director at the WWF in Washington, D.C., for seven years, became managing director of the Office of Environmental Affairs for JPMorgan Chase in 2008.⁵⁴

Also in 2008, Walmart joined the WWF’s Global Forest and Trade Network (GFTN) and made a commitment to remove illegal sources of wood from its supply chain and shift to

wood products originating from credibly certified sources.⁵⁵ Cooperation with GFTN by P&G's Family Care business prompted P&G to begin using sugarcane-derived plastic for some of its packaging. In addition, the WWF is collaborating with P&G to increase energy and water conservation and the use of renewable resources in manufacturing its products.⁵⁶

The WWF accepts that global warming is already a reality, so it is helping local communities and governments adapt. In the Eastern Himalayas, where water is becoming scarce, it is promoting rainwater capture systems and drought-tolerant crops. In Coastal East Africa the WWF is working to restore mangrove forests that protect the shorelines from storm erosion.⁵⁷

The Nature Conservancy

The Nature Conservancy's mission "is to preserve the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive."⁵⁸ It identifies as deeply held convictions that characterize how its members conduct themselves, the following core values: (1) integrity beyond reproach; (2) respect for people, communities, and cultures; (3) commitment to diversity; (4) one conservancy; and (5) tangible, lasting results.⁵⁹

The first two of these convictions are clearly ethical arguments for the character of the organization and its members. The third and fourth commitments to diversity and yet unity reflect a strong emphasis on relationships. The fifth recognizes that consequences also matter. To realize this last commitment, the organization seeks to combine the best available conservation science with creative innovation.

The Conservancy is known for facilitating debt-for-nature swaps, such as the agreement by the United States in 2006 to forgive \$24 million in debt owed to it by Guatemala, which instead is being used to fund forest conservation in that country.⁶⁰ The Conservancy is also famous for saving forestland by purchasing it, as it did in 2008 when it paid half a billion dollars for 320,000 acres in western Montana.⁶¹

In late 2006 The Conservancy joined the WWF and Stanford University in a new conservation partnership. "The Natural Capital Project is focused on living natural capital assets—ecosystems that, if properly managed, yield a flow of vital services both to humans and nature. Relative to other forms of capital, natural capital is poorly understood, rarely monitored, and in many cases undergoing rapid degradation and depletion. Often the tremendous importance and economic value of natural capital is appreciated only upon its loss."⁶²

The Natural Capital Project is developing InVEST, a family of software-based tools for Integrated Valuation of Ecosystem Services and Tradeoffs. InVEST will allow decision-makers to quantify natural capital to assess the trade-offs involved in integrating conservation and economic development. The National Center for Ecological Assessment and Synthesis, a research center at the University of California at Santa Barbara, has been collaborating with The Nature Conservancy in the development of this software.⁶³

The Conservancy is investing in nature with a concern for people as well as preserving the environment. This is why, in 2011, it hired a scientist to work on "agricultural strategies—including the use of high-production agriculture—to feed the world, but in a way that

sustains natural systems.” Peter Kareiva, chief scientist for The Conservancy, argues that “people’s need for energy, food, and economic development should be viewed as drivers of conservation activity, not anathema to it.”⁶⁴

Despite (or perhaps because of) its strong commitment to science, The Nature Conservancy is also working with indigenous communities to preserve their traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) as well as protect their habitats. In southwest Alaska, to sustain fish and wildlife for indigenous communities, the local native organizations have asked The Conservancy to conduct a TEK study under the guidance of the Nushagak-Mulchatna Watershed Council.⁶⁵

The Conservancy is also experimenting with partnerships with large corporations. In 2011 it began a \$10 million, five-year partnership with the Dow Chemical Company. The goal of The Nature Conservancy in this collaboration is to increase Dow’s commitment to ecological sustainability by emphasizing the scientific arguments that support conserving energy and recycling waste.

Ethical Reasoning: Analysis

Duties and Rights

International law justifies environmental duties by affirming two rights and an ethical principle: the right of every people to environmentally sustainable development, the right of each person to a healthy environment, and the principle that humanity should preserve the earth’s biosphere for the sake of future generations. These three ethical arguments are anthropocentric.

None of the corporations considered in this chapter argues for environmental sustainability because persons have rights to a sustainable or healthy environment, and only the BlueGreen Alliance among the NGOs mentioned affirms the right to a healthy environment for workers and communities. Despite their concern for wild animals, none of the NGOs mentioned asserts animal rights as a reason for protecting the natural environment.

By its involvement in UN programs for implementing the sustainability goals affirmed through international law, JPMorgan Chase implicitly accepts the duties identified by the UN. It also explicitly affirms the duties required by the Kyoto Protocol, and by endorsing the Carbon Principles the corporation acknowledges a duty to use caution in considering the carbon emissions likely to result from economic development.⁶⁶ In addition, the commitment by JPMorgan Chase to encourage *environmental stewardship* among its suppliers is not merely a consequential argument, but reflects a sense of duty to promote sustainability because it is right.

P&G’s supplier scorecard requirement enforces duties on those companies that intend to do business with P&G. In taking this stance, P&G accepts that it has a duty to reduce its *holistic* carbon footprint, although it does not explain whether this is a duty to all living humans, to future generations, or to both. Walmart enforces a similar duty on its suppliers by expecting them to comply with its Supplier Sustainability Assessment.

This same duty is reflected in P&G’s commitment that its production of sustainable goods “will not result in the destruction of critical ecosystems, loss of habitat for endangered species, or other detrimental impacts on the environment or human communities.” The “will not” in this sentence makes it a descriptive statement. Yet the ethical inference is

unmistakable. P&G is affirming its duty to ensure the goods it produces and advertises for our consumption are (as they “should be”) verifiably sustainable by an LCA.

The practice of neutralizing the carbon emissions related to corporate air travel, and for Interface also land transportation, including employee commuting, implicitly reflects a duty for preserving the ecology of the planet. These corporations do not explicitly use these ethical arguments, but they also do not justify these expenses by offering a consequential argument for offsetting carbon emissions as being good for business.

Character and Relationships

Neutralizing carbon emissions might be understood as setting a good example and in this sense could be a character argument.⁶⁷ The personal story of Anderson, the CEO of Interface, offers a clear character argument for corporate responsibility, reminding us that individuals who are motivated to act more responsibly can make a difference. This is especially true, of course, when they have positions of power in a government, corporation, or NGO.

Also, corporations may recognize employees for their outstanding contribution to environmental sustainability. In 2011 P&G praised Dr. Tom Federle for receiving the prestigious Samuel Rosen Memorial Award from the American Oil Chemists’ Society (AOCS) in recognition of his success in developing a biodegradable plastic.⁶⁸ His outstanding research may or may not have increased profits for P&G, but he was honored for the virtue of being an exemplary scientist with a commitment to improving the environmental sustainability of P&G products.

Among the NGOs considered, Greenpeace and The Nature Conservancy support the character virtues of integrity, nonviolence, goodwill toward opponents, and respectful conduct in the course of environmental activism. All the NGOs also support partnership strategies involving governments as well as businesses. These may be simply practical commitments based on consequential reasoning, but some supporters of these NGOs may believe cooperation is intrinsically good.

NGOs share a commitment to “the best science” in understanding the earth’s ecology and what efforts should be made to protect its ecosystems, and clearly Interface and P&G in the making of carpets and other goods rely heavily on scientific innovation to reduce waste. Recently, Interface has embraced biomimicry and LCA for product design, and similarly, P&G relies on a holistic conception of LCA to ensure that its manufacturing changes have the greatest overall impact on environmental sustainability.

The Nature Conservancy and the BlueGreen Alliance explicitly include human well-being in their concern for environmental sustainability, and Greenpeace, the Sierra Club, and the WWF share a delight in nature that clearly motivates the members of these advocacy organizations. There is a sense, in the photos of wild places and animals on the websites of these NGOs, of belonging to an ecological wonderland that deserves our protection and respect.

Consequences

Whatever duty and character arguments we offer for protecting the environment, they will be tested by consequential reasoning. We must compare what is likely to happen if no action is taken with what the outcomes are likely to be if we make a change.

There seems to be a shift in emphasis in environmental policy from regulation and threatening enforcement measures to investment, partnerships, and incentives. We would expect to see this in corporate environmental policy, but it is present as well in the EPA's Energy Star and Green Power Partnership programs and in the partnership commitments of the Sierra Club, the WWF, and The Nature Conservancy. It is also the primary strategy of the BlueGreen Alliance.

Accountability is crucial. Interface, P&G, and Walmart utilize third-party reports about product ingredients and environmental impacts that occur during the manufacture and use of a product.

NOTES

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 - Functions carried out by the Federal Water Quality Administration. (Interior)
 - Functions carried out by the Bureau of Solid Waste Management and the Bureau of Water Hygiene, and portions of the functions carried out by the Bureau of Radiological Health of the Environmental Control Administration. (Health, Education, and Welfare).
 - Functions carried out by the National Air Pollution Control Administration. (HEW)
 - Functions about pesticides carried out by the Food and Drug Administration. (HEW)
 - Authority to perform studies relating to ecological systems. (Council on Environmental Quality)
 - Some functions concerning radiation criteria and standards. (Atomic Energy Commission and the Federal Radiation Council)
 - Functions concerning pesticide registration and related activities carried out by the Agricultural Research Service. (Department of Agriculture)
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