



Times-News

April Fuels Day: Don't Be Foolish

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ECO NOTES



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Imagine waking up and finding you've won a big inheritance.

Having never had such riches before, you go out and spend, spend, spend. The bigger the house, the more money you need to furnish it. The bigger the car, the longer trips, the more fuel used. Eventually, all of the liquid assets are spent, the stocks and bonds have been cashed and what's left are some trinkets that are more trouble than they're worth to sell.

Now convert "inheritance" to petroleum. Oil is our geological inheritance, left over from the process of decomposition of microorganisms millions of years ago.

There seems to be overwhelming evidence that the United States spent half its inheritance and reached the peak of its oil capacity in the 1970s, meaning that we have reached the point where we're drawing as much oil out of the ground as we ever will.

The global oil peak is expected to be reached soon. In essence, this means that we've pulled out all of the "low-hanging fruit," and what's left is much more expensive to reach and provides fewer returns. That's why no manner of deepwater drilling in the Gulf of Mexico, in Brazil or the Canadian tar sands will make much of a difference. What we have left are the trinkets.

The notion of energy independence means a far different thing when global oil depletion is added to the equation. Rather than wrongly relying on drilling deeper than ever, the question might be: How do we transform our community into one that no longer is dependent on oil to function?

Whether we like it or not, gas will be \$5 a gallon in the near future, and it's not a stretch that it will be in double digits before the decade runs out. Since our entire way of life, from shipping in food and supplies to money from the Federal Reserve to feed local banks, is dependent on cheap gas, a huge rise in gas prices could have a dramatic effect on whether our grocery stores are stocked, whether our ATMs have funds and whether our farmers can afford the price of fertilizers.

That's where April Fuels Day comes in. We've grown accustomed to driving everywhere at anytime for anything. No need for neighbors, friends, coworkers ... we're independent.

So in announcing April Fuels Day on April 1, ECO is asking our community to take one day of the year and work with neighbors, coworkers and friends to figure out another way to get to where you're going. Walking is the best exercise and is a great way to truly appreciate our sacred mountains. Bicycling is also great on small streets where there's little traffic or blind turns. Or don't go anywhere at all.

Maybe after doing this for one day, we'll find that shopping with the neighbors works really well. Or the boss is open to telecommuting every Friday, or that Henderson County is in desperate need for bike lanes and a mass transportation system, and it's time to do something about it.

We're not going to change the world on April 1, but we can start with the little things, such as how can we be more resilient.

How do you begin? Plan your trips in advance, coordinate with others and streamline your driving. It's amazing how much money you'll save, how much pollution we'll cut and, eventually, how much more resilient a community we can build. One trip at a time.

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