

To Restore the Earth Here is What Needs to Happen

To save civilization requires a massive mobilization at wartime speed. The good news is that almost everything we need to do has already been done by one or more countries

1. **Stabilize population.** Reduce fertility to the replacement level or just below. In seven years Iran cut population growth in half using these strategies: a national family planning law; establishment of health clinics; mobilizing resources of several government agencies toward the goal; making a full panoply of family planning measures available free; raising female literacy; using TV to disseminate information.

2. **Build a global solar/wind/geo-mass hydrogen energy economy.** New Zealand, led by Helen Clark, aspires to be “carbon neutral”. Its goal is to boost the renewable share of its electricity to 90% by 2025. North Dakota, Kansas and Texas have enough harnessable wind energy to satisfy national electricity needs. Iceland has partnered with a consortium of corporations who have agreed to make that country the world’s first hydrogen-powered economy.

3. **Redesign urban centers for people not cars.** Integrate rail and bicycle, shift to fuel cell powered cars, electrify freight and passenger trains, promote walking and biking. The Bicycle Master Plan of The Netherlands provides for the creation of bicycle lanes and trails in all its cities. Roughly 30% of all urban trips there are on bicycle. When public transport is the centerpiece, augmented with walk and bikeways, exercise, clean air, and green space result.

4. **Design fiscal and regulatory policy to establish environmentally constructive activity.** Lower taxes on work; raise taxes on environmentally destructive activities such as carbon emissions. Base raised taxes on the true ecological cost of such activities. Subsidize not mining but recycling, not fossil fuels but climate-benign energy sources, not urban auto dependency but urban rail systems. China is shifting subsidies from coal to wind. Smoking is routinely banned in many settings.

5. **Restore earth’s natural systems.** Institute global reforestation efforts to prevent flooding and to soak up carbons. Control erosion through contour farming and strip cropping. Combat desertification through improved rangeland management, incentives to eliminate overstocking and revegetation. Regenerate fisheries through establishing marine parks where fishing is off limits thus allowing fish to live longer, grow larger and produce more offspring. Raise water productivity through converting to water-efficient irrigation practices. The Billion Tree Campaign in 2007 reported receiving pledges to plant a total of 1.2 billion trees by years end.

6. **Design a New Materials Economy.** This includes creating recyable products, banning those that pollute, taxing garbage generation, offering incentives for eco-friendly products, clustering factories so that waste produced by one can be used as raw materials by another. Ireland now charges 43 cents for each plastic bag used. Denmark has banned throwaway beverage containers.

Results We Can Expect: a thriving planet with enough clean water and food for all, clear air, and beautiful countryside and cities that combine culture and nature in life giving ways.

This paper written by Jacqueline McMakin is based on these books by Lester Brown, President of the Earth Policy Institute: *Eco-Economy* and *Plan B 3.0*.