



# American Corner

## Universidad de Tarapacá

April 2007 Vol. 2

## Earth Day 2007

Earth Day (April 22) is a holiday in the United States where people celebrate advances made in protecting the environment. More importantly, many people use this day to find new ways to help make the planet a cleaner, healthier place for today and for generations to come. Read this publication for more information on Earth Day and related activities.

### 10 Easy Things You Can Do To Save the Planet

There are many easy things we can do to help save the planet. Many people say, "What difference can I make?" However, every little bit can help. Here is a list of 10 things you can do to help save the planet.

- 1) Turn off appliances and lights when you leave the room.
- 2) Use a microwave to cook smaller meals. It uses less energy than a regular oven.
- 3) Don't let the water run while shaving or brushing your teeth.
- 4) Repair all leaks. A lot of water is wasted through leaky pipes.
- 5) Buy permanent items instead of disposable ones, such as bags, plates, etc.
- 6) Use cloth napkins or towels, instead of paper.
- 7) Use empty jars and bottles to store leftover food and drinks.
- 8) Reuse boxes.
- 9) Buy products with less packaging.
- 10) Take your own bags to the market. Try not to use plastic bags give to you in the checkout line.

You see? These are a few very easy solutions to some of our environmental problems. Not only can you save the planet, but you will also save money on electric and water bills! Maybe you can think of other easy ways to help the environment!

## Earth Day Activities in the American Corner

The American Corner is presenting a series of events in honor of Earth Day. Here is a brief description:

**Video Conference with DVD Presentation** - The 5 American Corners of Chile, along with the United States Embassy in Santiago, are coordinating a DVD presentation of the movie, "An Inconvenient Truth" (La Verdad Incómoda). "An Inconvenient Truth" is the award winning documentary starring ex-vice president, Al Gore, in which he describes what he calls a "planetary emergency", global warming. Preceding the showing of the movie, James Storey will provide a brief presentation via digital video conference from the U.S. Embassy in Brazil. Mr. Storey, the director of environmental, science and technology, and health issues among the U.S. Embassies in South America, is an expert in environmental



and scientific topics and is the ex-vice consul to the U.S. Embassy in Guadalajara, Mexico. The movie will be presented in English with Spanish subtitles. The video conference will be presented in Spanish.

**Date:** Wednesday, April 25

**Time:** 11:00 a.m.

**Place:** Sala Diego Portales

**Panel Discussion on Issues Concerning Water Contamination in Arica, Chile** - Many people living in Arica have become vaguely aware that there are problems with contamination in the drinking water of the city and surrounding areas. The American Corner is presenting a panel discussion, which will discuss the dangers and possible solutions of having heavy metals such as lead and barium in the water supply of Arica - Parinacota. This conference will be presented in Spanish.

**Date:** Thursday, April 26

**Time:** 17:00

**Place:** Sala Centenario

## Global Warming - The Basics

The Earth's climate has changed many times during the planet's history, with events ranging from ice ages to long periods of warmth. Historically, natural factors such as volcanic eruptions, changes in the Earth's orbit, and the amount of energy released from the Sun have affected the Earth's climate. Beginning late in the 18th century, human activities associated with the Industrial Revolution have also changed the composition of the atmosphere and therefore likely are influencing the Earth's climate.

### Science

For over the past 200 years, the burning of fossil fuels, such as coal and oil, and deforestation have caused the concentrations of heat-trapping "greenhouse gases" to increase significantly in our atmosphere. These gases prevent heat from escaping to space, somewhat like the glass panels of a greenhouse.

Greenhouse gases are necessary to life as we know it, because they keep the planet's surface warmer than it otherwise would be. But, as the concentrations of these gases continue to increase in the atmosphere, the Earth's temperature is climbing above past levels.

According to NOAA and NASA data, the Earth's average surface temperature has increased by about 1.2 to 1.4°F since 1900. The warmest global average temperatures on record have all occurred within the past 15 years, with the warmest two years being 1998 and 2005. Most of the warming in recent decades is likely the result of human activities. Other aspects of the climate are also changing such as rainfall patterns, snow and ice cover, and the sea level.

If greenhouse gases continue to increase, climate models predict that the average temperature at the Earth's surface could increase from 2.5 to 10.4°F above 1990 levels by the end of this century. Scientists are certain that human activities are changing the composition of the atmosphere, and that increasing the concentration of greenhouse gases will change the planet's climate. But they are not sure by how much it will change, at what rate it will change, or what the exact effects will be. See the Science and Health and Environmental Effects sections of this site for more detail.

### Greenhouse Gas Emissions



In the U.S., our energy-related activities account for three-quarters of our human-generated greenhouse gas emissions, mostly in the form of carbon dioxide emissions from burning fossil fuels. More than half the energy-related emissions come from large stationary sources such as power plants, while about a third comes from transportation. Industrial processes (such as the production of cement, steel, and aluminum), agriculture, forestry, other land use, and waste management are also important sources of greenhouse gas emissions in the United States.

For a better understanding of where greenhouse gas emissions come from, governments at the federal, state and local levels prepare emissions inventories, which track emissions from various parts of the economy such as transportation, electricity production, industry, agriculture, forestry, and other sectors. EPA publishes the official national inventory of US greenhouse gas emissions, and the latest greenhouse gas inventory shows that in 2004 the U.S. emitted over 7 billion metric tons of greenhouse gases (a million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalents (MMTCO<sub>2</sub>e) is roughly equal to the annual GHG emissions of an average U.S. power plant.) Visit the Emissions section of this site to learn more.

## Health and Environmental Effects

Climate change affects people, plants, and animals. Scientists are working to better understand future climate change and how the effects will vary by region and over time.

Scientists have observed that some changes are already occurring. Observed effects include sea level rise, shrinking glaciers, changes in the range and distribution of plants and animals, trees blooming earlier, lengthening of growing seasons, ice on rivers and lakes freezing later and breaking up earlier, and thawing of permafrost. Another key issue being studied is how societies and the Earth's environment will adapt to or cope with climate change.

In the United States, scientists believe that most areas will continue to warm, although some will likely warm more than others. It remains very difficult to predict which parts of the country will become wetter or drier, but scientists generally expect increased precipitation and evaporation, and drier soil in the middle parts of the country. Northern regions such as Alaska are expected to experience the most warming. In fact, Alaska has been experiencing significant changes in climate in recent years that may be at least partly related to human caused global climate change.

Human health can be affected directly and indirectly by climate change in part through extreme periods of heat and cold, storms, and climate-sensitive diseases such as malaria, and smog episodes.

For more information on the environment and global warming, please visit the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's website at [www.epa.gov/](http://www.epa.gov/). This website also contains information and materials for children.

## Webcasts in the American Corner

This is an opportunity to watch on-line discussions with experts in a number of different topics. Read the comments of the expert and send them questions in real time. It works a lot like a normal chat room. This is a good opportunity to broaden your horizons and practice your English! For detailed information on webcasts, check out the webpage at <http://webchat.state.gov/>. **Remember** that if you cannot enter the webchat at the actual time that is listed, you may go to the website at anytime to read the transcripts of previous webcasts. Some upcoming webcasts are:



**David H. Wilkins - Ask the Ambassador: U.S. Ambassador to Canada (April 13 from 13:00 - 14:00):** Participants will have a chance to "discuss" with the Ambassador topics of interest, such as U.S. - Canada relations, global problems of concern to Canadians and Americans, new passport requirements, the Security and Prosperity Partnership, and other current events. This is your chance to question the Ambassador on these and other points of interest.

**Fatina Abdrabboh - Muslim Women in America: Today's Scholars, Tomorrow's Leaders (April 16 from 9:00 to 10:00):** Fatina Abdrabboh, a graduate student of Islamic studies and international security at Harvard University, participated in a ten-day Department of State traveling speaker program in Niger last June to discuss her research on Islam, and life as a Muslim woman in America. Please join Abdrabboh for a USINFO webchat as she answers your questions on a variety of political and social issues related to America's Arab and Muslim communities. In addition to English, Abdrabboh speaks French and Arabic.

**Janusz Bugajski - What Does the Future Hold for Kosovo? (April 24 at 10:00):** The United Nations Security Council began debate on April 3 on the Kosovo plan drawn up by former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari, who served as the special representative of the UN Security Council in talks on the future of Kosovo.

Ahtisaari, who spent 15 months talking with Serbian and Kosovo officials, concluded after exhaustive negotiations that independence for Kosovo is the only option available to ensure its political and economic stability. Approving the proposal would mean that Kosovo, which is officially a province of Serbia, would gain independence under the supervision of the European Union.

What does Kosovo's status mean to the future of Southeast Europe, the European Union and the United States? These and many more questions will be answered by Janusz Bugajski, an expert on the region from the Center for Strategic and International Studies

**Jim O'Brien - What Will Kosovo's Independence Mean to Southeast Europe, the EU, and the United States? (April 24<sup>th</sup> at 11:00):** On March 26, following 14 months of negotiations, U.N. special envoy Martti Ahtisaari formally recommended that Kosovo be granted independence while remaining under the supervision of the international community. The United States and the European Union have endorsed Ahtisaari's recommendation, which is now being debated by the U.N. Security Council. Under Ahtisaari's proposal, Kosovo would be supervised by the European Union -- with NATO continuing to protect minority groups -- until Kosovo authorities demonstrate their ability to meet the international community's goal of a multi-ethnic Kosovo able to govern itself democratically while promoting peace and prosperity for all its inhabitants.

What does Kosovo's independence mean to the future of South East Europe, the European Union, NATO and the United States? These and many more questions will be answered by Jim O'Brien, an expert on the region from the Albright Group on April 24 at 11:00 EDT (1500 GMT).

### Book of the Month

The Green House: New Directions in Sustainable Architecture

By Alanna Stang & Christopher Hawtorne

"The Green House" is an indispensable guide for anyone interested in harnessing the environmental, economic, and physiological benefits of living green. It is required reading for all architects and design-conscious consumers planning the construction of their own home.

### American Corner Hours

Monday through Thursday:

9:00 - 13:00

and

15:00 - 18:00

Friday:

9:00 - 13:00

and

15:00 - 16:00

### Contact US!!

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Or Come See Us on the Second of El Anexo del Biblioteca, Campus Saucache.

### In April, We Celebrate...

#### Jazz Appreciation Month

**Palm Sunday** – April 1st

**Passover Begins** – April 2nd

**Good Friday** – April 6th

**Easter Sunday** – April 8th

**Holocaust Remembrance Day** – April 15th

**Earth Day** – April 22nd

### Current American Corner Activities

**"An Inconvenient Truth" DVC:** April 25 @ 11:00 in the Sala Diego Portales

**Water Contamination in Arica Panel Discussion:** April 26 @ 17:00 in the Sala Centenario

**Fun & Game in the Rincón Infantil:** Daily meetings @ 10:00-10:30 and 16:00 - 16:30.

**English Conversation Hour:** Thursdays from 16:30 - 17:30. (All are welcome!)

### Sources

Earthday - 10 Things You Can Do To Save the Planet: [www.earthday.gov](http://www.earthday.gov)

The Inconvenient Truth: [www.climatecrisis.net](http://www.climatecrisis.net)

Global Warming - The Basics: [www.epa.gov/climatechange/basicinfo.html](http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/basicinfo.html)

Webcasts: [usinfo.state.gov/usinfo/USINFO/Products/Webchats/upcoming.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/usinfo/USINFO/Products/Webchats/upcoming.html)