

THE YOUNG ENVIRONMENTALIST

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Birmingham and the Recycling Crisis

ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Because of our resolution, the Environmental Legislation of the Alabama Environmental Youth Council made some distressing discoveries about our chosen city of Birmingham Alabama. In 2018, an article posted by Bham Now explained how the U.S. as a whole recycles 34.3% of waste. By that same token, Alabama is reported to only recycle 16% of waste, numbers falling drastically behind earlier this year due to Covid. Because of this, the University of Alabama in Birmingham expanded its UAB Recycling Drop-Off Center to accommodate hours for students to drop off any recyclable materials. UAB recycling regularly collects the three main recyclables (plastic bottles, aluminum cans, and paper/cardboard), though during this process they found interesting facts about how much it takes from the state to throw away garbage rather than recycle.

The UAB Facilities Division states that if Alabama recycled only 10% more materials, then it would result in 3,000,000\$ in tax revenue and 1,400 jobs for Alabama citizens. They also stated that the state of Alabama in 2011 spent over 25,000,000\$ to discard 193,000,000\$ worth of recyclable materials, which as previously stated would have resulted in more jobs for the people of Alabama, especially at this time from the toll Covid has taken on our community. Regardless, it is here and now which the city of Birmingham Alabama is taking action against this recycling crisis. Regular Curbside recycling is coming back, though as in most Alabama cities, the whole city does not have access to this institution. We plan to keep track of this problem and how the city is healing from Covid, documenting our findings for the hopeful future.

Nobel Prize but make it Environmental

Nature Conservation Committee

Prince William, a well known member of the royal family, has announced as of October 8th an award that will change the environmental platform. His Earthshot Prize is the most prestigious environmental award of all time. It is essentially a Nobel Prize for those who make the greatest difference in our environment. There is a 1.3 million dollar prize for five winners on the line each year. The initiative's main goal is to, as his Royal Foundation states, "protect and restore nature, clean our air, revive our oceans, build a waste-free world, [and] fix our climate". Prince William's primary concern is the critical period of the next 10 years, so nominations begin this year on November 1, 2020 and span to a predicted 2030. A network of 100 selected partners will be allowed to nominate those who they believe have made the greatest difference in one of the five categories. An elaborate ceremony will be held each year in a different city around the world to announce the 5 winners out of the 15 finalists. The first Olympic Games of the environmental world per say will be held in Prince William's own hometown--London, England fall 2021.

The panel of judges, formally known as "The Earthshot Prize Council", make for an impressive, diverse group of individuals. The council includes Prince William himself along with 12 other members from across the globe and varying backgrounds, some of the most popularized names being Shakira, a singer and philanthropist hailing from Colombia, and Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah, the queen of Jordan. Prince William chose environmental voices that are heard and respected around the globe, many being celebrities of countries across the world who have used their fame to push environmental issues to the forefront of the public conscience. Prince William explains that his mission is to encourage action to salvage the environment by adding a positive incentive to counteract the often pessimistic view on environmentalism as the looming issues of our ecosystem can become overwhelming to the point of paralysis in a course of action. The money incentive is intended to motivate those who care to actually do something with their worries and passion to make a difference. The Earthshot Prize will have awarded over 64.5 million dollars and produced 50 ground-breaking environmental solutions as well as countless initiatives in the spirit of competition by the end of the ten, upcoming and crucial years. Prince William wishes to unite the people of the world towards a common goal to find solutions, and the Earthshot Prize provides an opportunity for great change in the pressing environmental issues of today.

DID YOU KNOW?

Only 3% of our planet's water is drinkable and 97% of it is saltwater. More than half of the earth's freshwater can be found frozen in glaciers the rest underground.



Climate Change and Alabama's Education System

EDUCATIONAL OUTEREACH COMMITTEE

The National Center for Science Education and the Texas Freedom Education Network Fund issued a report in October 2020 that analyzed school science standards addressing climate change by state. The report can be found on climategrades.org. All fifty states and the District of Columbia were assigned a letter grade from F to A based on the following criteria: "To what extent is the treatment of the issue in the standards helpful in permitting students to reach these conclusions?, To what extent is the treatment of the issue in the standards appropriately explicit?, To what extent is the treatment of the issue in the standards integrated in a coherent learning progression?, To what extent do the standards make it clear to teachers what knowledge and skills students are expected to attain?, To what extent would a student who met the performance expectations in the standards relevant to the issue be prepared for further study in higher education?, and To what extent would a student who met the performance expectations in the standards relevant to the ue be prepared for responsible participation in civic deliberation about climate change?" Three evaluators, Sarah Myhre, Steve Rissing, and Casey Williams determined the grade of each state.

iSarah Myhre is a climate scientist and environmental activist who has a doctorate in ecology. Steve Rissing is an emeritus professor of Evolution, Ecology and Organismal Biology at Ohio State University. Casey Williams is a former high school science teacher who has a doctorate in educational psychology. Their report ranked Alabama among the bottom six states who received an F in education about climate change. The evaluators argue that Alabama's education about climate change fails to address it is a serious, threatening issue. One evaluator suggests that Alabama's education standards, "downplay the reality, significance, human causes, and immediacy of climate change," while another suggests that "the [standards do] not address the science of climate change. The concept that climate change is anthropogenic is absent. The concept that it poses serious risk is also absent." According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, Alabama is experiencing rising sea levels of about one inch every eight years. Within the next century, climate change is expected to cause a significant rise in temperatures, more extreme flooding and drought, as well as greater precipitation downpours within the state. Most scientists agree that climate change is a real threat in the upcoming future, therefore it is imperative that the education system adequately educates the next generation about the topic. The National Center for Science Education and the Texas Freedom Education Network Fund believe that states need to revise their state science education standards. They believe that the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) are a good base model to help sufficiently educate about climate change, however they suggest that these standards can also be improved upon..

A LITTLE SHOWER THOUGHT

Aluminum can be recycled continuously, as in forever. Recycling 1 aluminum can save enough energy to run our TVs for at least 3 hours. 80 trillion aluminum cans are used by humans every year.

THE INTERSECTIONALITY BETWEEN HUMAN DISEASE AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Sustainable Waste Management Committee

In the midst of COVID, there has been much talk about the relationship that the virus has with climate change. Although there hasn't been any substantial evidence that shows a definite connection between the two, global warming has many times been the cause of public health concerns. For example, as the planet grows warmer, animals start moving away from their home environment and wander into areas that they are foreign to, in hopes of finding an ecosystem that better suits their preferred temperature or weather. This leads to species that usually don't coexist with

each other to come in contact, creating an opportunity for pathogens to get into new hosts (Harvard).

On a smaller scale, issues such as air pollution or deforestation can also cause a rise in health concerns. For example, fuel combustion from motor vehicles or industrial facilities is a very prominent aspect of cities; this causes harmful chemicals to be released, and those living in nearby areas and breathing in the polluted air can become more prone to respiratory diseases (WHO). As for deforestation, when forests are consistently clear cut, a plethora of insect-borne and other infectious diseases can

affect humans (Yale Environment). This again ties into the phenomena that when an ecosystem is destroyed, native species migrate to other, new locations, which can serve as a major factor of disease and outbreaks.

It's critical to understand that everything that affects us is directly related to how we affect the environment. Even this horrible pandemic that society is facing could be affiliated to the negative impacts that were caused by humans to the Earth. With this in mind, we should be even more aware of our own actions and strive for a more eco-conscious and sustainable lifestyle - not only for the future but also for the now.

The More You Know

A common misconception is that "zero waste" efforts to eliminate single-use plastics minimize the environmental impacts of an event. In reality, the benefits of diverting waste from the landfill are small. Waste reduction and mindful consumption, including a careful consideration of the types and quantities of products consumed, are far larger factors dictating the environmental impact of an event.



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