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Let's Take Care of Our Tree Lungs

At this time of year in this area on Earth trees change noticeably by the day. Just amazing!

Trees are at once fascinating and beautiful. It can be helpful to look around and identify the many ways we “use” them: for shade in summer and warmth in winter, as objects of our admiration, source for multitudinous articles we use – from toothpicks to all sorts of furniture, for water absorption.

Trees also serve a vital function in the cycle of human life on Earth: they take in carbon dioxide and produce oxygen. We humans take in oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide. (Talk about partnership!)

This vital service of trees as lungs operates on a planetary scale also. A disturbing development here though: trees are being removed faster than they are replaced. The reasons range from clearing land for other crops (for use in biofuel production being a most recent crop choice) and cattle, mining (Kentucky allows forested mountain tops to be blasted away to get at coal easily), logging (whether done sustainably and legally or not), for wood (used responsibly or not), for housing, airports, shopping centers – no doubt you can add to this list.

This loss of trees is important not just for taking up human breathing output but for dealing with the other ways we are adding carbon dioxide to Earth's air from burning fossil fuels: from transportation of all kinds, buildings, energy generation, industrial activity and wildfires. Whatever the cause, this deficit of trees is serious.

(Sustainability is a/the key word and major goal as we move into the future of life on Earth.)

Kentucky's own Wendell Berry and Bardstown's own John M Anderson with Kentucky Division of For-

estry urge careful care of forest land – land on which trees are growing. This means that when trees are removed, what is left is a stand of healthy trees of various ages, sizes and diversity of species with their tops left unbroken. Wendell Berry speaks of the principle, “Worse first, single-tree selection.”

John Anderson notes that Kentucky is 48% forested - and so Kentucky is important to our global community in this regard. He notes further that we are growing more trees than we are cutting, but unfortunately, the quality of our trees is decreasing.

While it isn't actually hard, Kentucky needs effective forest management. It is not helpful that Kentucky is one of the least regulated among the US states. The state does regulate the roads loggers use.

One can contact Mr Anderson at the Bluegrass Region of Kentucky Division of Forestry to learn some great ways people can get involved in tending their forest land. (There is some money to be made, and if we are wise, this market will grow.) Contact him at 270-766-5010 or check Kentucky Division for Forestry's website, <http://www.forestry.ky.gov/distoff/>

Gratitude to all in the area who take good care of trees.

Yet again, all on Earth is so connected. Humans may be the smartest, but we certainly do fundamentally depend on all sorts of entities in the rest of creation. We don't have to be “tree-huggers” to increase our appreciation of all that just trees contribute to life on Earth.

April 2008

The Catholic Conference of Kentucky (CCK) is an agency of the Catholic Bishops of Kentucky, established in 1968. It speaks for the Church in matters of public policy, serves as liaison to government and the legislature, and coordinates communications and activities between the church and secular agencies. There are 406,000 Catholics in the Commonwealth. The Bishops of the four dioceses of KY constitute CCK's Board of Directors.