Bryan Guner

Op Ed Brief

Global:

MacKerron, Gorge. "Happiness Is Greater in Natural Environments." *Science Direct*. Elsevier, 3 Oct. 2013. Web. 09 Nov. 2014.

* There has been mounting evidence that happiness is strongly affected by physical environment
* Subjective wellbeing has been strongly linked to the following factors:
* Weather
* Daylight
* Companionship
* Location
* Time
* People are substantially happier when surrounded by a natural setting than an urban environment.
* This correlation likely stems from reproductive and therefore evolutionary success in areas of vegetation inhabited by our ancestors.
* There are neurological pathways through which environment may bring about stress reduction and restoration of attention
* “natural environments may be lower in environmental ‘bads’ that have significant negative impacts on physical and mental wellbeing, which in turn could affect happiness. Adverse health effects of noise and air pollution are well documented. Chronic traffic noise exposure in urban environments can cause severe sleep disturbance, hearing impairment, tinnitus, and raised stress levels, leading to high blood pressure, coronary heart disease, stroke, and possibly immune system and birth defects (Passchier-Vermeer and Passchier, 2000). Similarly, air pollution can lead to a wide range of respiratory and cardiovascular problems (Gouveia and Maisonet, 2005). As noted by Welsch (2006), this link does not require that individuals are conscious of the causal relationship between an environmental problem and their own happiness. However, awareness of a local environmental problem, and of its negative effects on human and ecosystem health, could also act to reduce happiness levels directly and independently”
* It has been shown that interventions like creating a wooded area in urban environments can have huge impact on the general well being of it’s population.
* In order to understand how environment effects a population qualitative data must be collected from it’s inhabitance in order to understand what solution would best fit the need.
* Mappiness a Mobil phone app that allows cell phone users to rate different aspects of their happiness in different locations has demonstrated a direct link between human happiness and environment as well as changes in environment.
* There is a strong correlation between decreased happiness and environmental damage such as logging, poaching, water pollution, and even reef destruction.”

*(This source establishes the need to make environmental changes if for no other reason than to preserve human sanity and wellbeing. It details how the correlation between subjective well being and environment was established as well as offering meaningful insight as to how and why this relationship exists.)*

Nijhuis, Michelle. "Green Failure: What's Wrong With Environmental Education?" *By Michelle Nijhuis: Yale*. Environment 360, 26 May 2011. Web. 09 Nov. 2014.

* Environmental issues are hailed as a political issue but in reality it should be a non-partisan value.
* Environmental education provides us with the tools we need to make informed decisions but generally fails to provoke action.
* The notion that if we make people aware of something horrible they will do something about it is flawed.
* Students are not educated about how the environment affects their personal lives.
* (teaching inner city kids who have never seen the ocean about marine conservation is misguided)
* The environment has become synonymous with hippie counter culture, environmental conservation’s image needs to change
* Schools need to teach the concept of externalities.
* Students should get to improve their own community first hand and perhaps even reap the benefits of the changes they make.
* Individual teachers teach students environmental consciousness but the concept is generally not institutionalized.
* Students should be taught about morality, society and politics ( they should not be biased to a specific societal model but rather taught the importance and function of having one.)

(*This source is an interview of Charles Saylan a Marine Conservationist who has switched his focus from Marine conservation to conservation education. He offers anecdotes about his childhood and subsequent professional experiences with environmental disregard. He explains that environmental education’s failure is that telling people something is wrong will prompt them to do something about it. He insists that in order to bring about meaningful change students must be taught to feel a personal connection with their immediate enviorments.)*

National:

Davenport, Coral. "Obama to Take Action to Slash Coal Pollution." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 01 June 2014. Web. 09 Nov. 2014.

* The Obama administration has recently announced that new environmental regulations will be put into place to reduce America’s carbon emissions by 30% from 2005 levels by 2030.
* This policy is aimed at the largest source of carbon pollution, coal fired power plants.
* It is likely Obama’s last chance as President to shape domestic policy.
* The states will be given a wide selection of ways to make their pollution cuts initially rather than shutting down coal plants immediately but must be phased out by 2030.
* Coal is the largest source of greenhouse gas.
* This E.P.A rule is intended to be used as a bargaining chip with other countries who have refused to make environmental changes on the president that America had no moral authority to demand that other nations curb pollution while America fails to do so.
* The coal industry is outraged claiming that this could be a source of economic havoc.
* Different law firms representing coal companies have expressed their outrage as evidenced by an email from Scott Segal a Lawyer charged with representing coal companies “Clearly, it is designed to materially damage the ability of conventional energy sources to provide reliable and affordable power, which in turn can inflict serious damage on everything from household budgets to industrial jobs.”
* The U.S. chamber of commerce issued a report warning that the ruling could lower gross domestic product by $50 billion annually.

*( This source is a New York times article that actually appears to be in favor of the ban on coal however it presents the obvious drawbacks which mostly include economic losses and political backlash.)*

Drajem, Mark. "Coal Industry Cries Foul Over Obama Emission Rules." *Bloomberg.com*. Bloomberg, 12 Sept. 2013. Web. 09 Nov. 2014.

* Obama’s climate plan requires coal factories to install expensive carbon capture technology that would make them half as effective as gas burning plants.
* The legislation does not explicitly ban coal but it’s implications effectively render the industry obsolete.
* “Once you set something in stone, you discourage investment in that sector, and you take a flexible market and ossify it,” Segal, a lawyer at Bracewell & Giuliani LLP in Washington, said in an interview. “The market price of natural gas can change but regulations don’t”
* the wide spread availability of natural gas and advances in wind turbine efficiency were already eroding the viability of coal.

*(This source, while technically a news article was very fact and statistic heavy rather than addressing opinions or appealing* *to the media sensationalism surrounding Obama’s Presidency.)*

Local:

"Coal Power: Air Pollution." *Union of Concerned Scientists*. Union of Concerned Scientists, 31 Mar. 2011. Web. 10 Nov. 2014.

* In 2011 the U.S. emitted 1.7 billion tones of CO2
* A typical plant generates 3.5 million tons annually.
* Coal is the leading cause of smog,, acid rain, toxic air pollution, pm 2.5 particles (particles of a small enough radius to penetrate the blood stream through the lungs and cause cancer and other diseases.
* Dangers to human health also include (“Sulfur dioxide (SO2): Coal plants are the United States’ leading source of SO2 pollution, which takes a major toll on public health, including by contributing to the formation of small acidic particulates that can penetrate into human lungs and be absorbed by the bloodstream. SO2 also causes acid rain, which damages crops, forests, and soils, and acidifies lakes and streams. A typical uncontrolled coal plant emits 14,100 tons of SO2 per year. A typical coal plant with emissions controls, including flue gas desulfurization (smokestack scrubbers), emits 7,000 tons of SO2 per year.
* Nitrogen oxides (NOx): NOx pollution causes ground level ozone, or smog, which can burn lung tissue, exacerbate asthma, and make people more susceptible to chronic respiratory diseases. A typical uncontrolled coal plant emits 10,300 tons of NOx per year. A typical coal plant with emissions controls, including selective catalytic reduction technology, emits 3,300 tons of NOx per year.
* Particulate matter: Particulate matter (also referred to as soot or fly ash) can cause chronic bronchitis, aggravated asthma, and premature death, as well as haze obstructing visibility. A typical uncontrolled plan emits 500 tons of small airborne particles each year. Baghouses installed inside coal plant smokestacks can capture as much as 99 percent of the particulates.
* Mercury: Coal plants are responsible for more than half of the U.S. human-caused emissions of mercury, a toxic heavy metal that causes brain damage and heart problems. Just 1/70th of a teaspoon of mercury deposited on a 25-acre lake can make the fish unsafe to eat. A typical uncontrolled coal plants emits approximately 170 pounds of mercury each year. Activated carbon injection technology can reduce mercury emissions by up to 90 percent when combined with bag houses. ACI technology is currently found on just 8 percent of the U.S. coal fleet.”)

*(This was a purely scientific analysis of the negative affects of burning coal, which is almost unanimously regarded as the dirtiest source of energy by a long shot.)*

"Beijing Bans Grieving Relatives Burning Their Loved Ones' Clothes to Clear Skies for Apec.” South China Morning Post, 4 Nov. 2014.

* The Chinese capital has been plagued by very serious air pollution in recent years.
* Primary sources include 5 million motor vehicles, coal burning plants, dust storms from the north and local construction dust.
* Beijing authorities have banned people from burning the cloths of their dead relatives, a traditional funeral right to ensure they can dress in the afterlife.
* This mandate directly preceded an APEC forum where leaders from the United States, Russia and Japan will convene to discuss economic cooperation.
* The government also imposed limits on car use, ordered factories to close, and gave private sector employees a 6 day holiday.
* Beijing has been addressing their environmental image since the toxic smog made headlines during the Beijing marathon.

*(This source reveals that Beijing has started to address it’s pollution issues if for no other reason than to improve public image.)*