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This is Dianne Daniels for Brookings Harbor Voices.

A dilemma facing our society today: How to reduce our foot print on the planet without just trading one problem for another?

Reducing reliance on fossil fuels will reduce carbon emissions. But, electric cars increase demand for electricity and require batteries which are non-recyclable and full of harmful chemicals to be disposed of. Ethanol, replaces some carbon fuel with corn-based additives that reduce mpg thereby increasing gas usage, is hard on the soil to grow, and increases demand for corn, making this diet staple of many less affordable and available. Replacing traditional power plants with solar and wind power units require vast tracks of land, kill tens of thousands of birds, including endangered ones, and produces less power at a higher cost.

Replacing non-recyclable plastics, like plastic straws and shopping bags, with other alternatives creates other issues. Paper straws fail easily, cost more, and require harvesting more trees. Choosing paper over plastic shopping bags also mean more tree use. Reusable tote bags solve the tree problem but require frequent washing and sanitizing to avoid spread of deadly germs...washing consumes more water, another resource to be conserved.

Replacing energy inefficient incandescent light bulbs with CFL (compact florescent light) bulbs saves electricity to produce the same amount of light, but CFLs contain mercury, a very toxic material. HAZMAT procedures are required if one breaks and they contaminate ground and water if thrown out with regular trash.

So, before leaping into supporting a “planet saving” switch, consider its impact. You may just be trading one bad thing for another.

Thank you for listening. And have nice day on the Wild Rivers Coast.