

A Pagan Community Statement on the Environment

Who we are

Paganism is a family of spiritual paths rooted in ancestral religions throughout the world and predating recorded history. As explained by the Pagan Federation, Paganism includes polytheistic and pantheistic nature-worshipping religions, and often includes deities of all genders, ancestor veneration, and celebrations in tune with our Earth. A full discussion of the many varieties of Paganism is beyond the scope of this statement, but we, the signatories, value life and the natural world as sacred. Thus, Pagan thought leads us to live in harmony with the rhythms of our great Earth.

Nature is sacred

We receive, acknowledge and embrace the sacred in and as nature, though our individual relationships with the natural world are diverse. We recognize that nature encompasses humanity and the planet, and that we are neither above nor separate from the rest of nature. We recognize the ancient wisdom that closeness to nature brings closeness among humanity and all living beings; and when we live as if we are separate from nature, we diminish our compassion for ourselves and for others. Therefore, we affirm the necessity of living sustainably as part of nature.

We are part of the web of life

In recent decades, many contemporary Pagan religious traditions have stressed humanity's interconnectivity with the rest of the natural world. Many of our ancestors realized what has now been supported by the scientific method and our expanding knowledge of the universe — that Earth's biosphere may be understood as a single ecosystem and that all life on Earth is interconnected.

The very atoms of which we are composed connect us to the entire universe. Our hydrogen was produced in the Big Bang, and the other atoms essential for life were forged in the scorching furnaces of ancient stars. Beyond atoms, the molecules of life connect us to Earth, showing that we don't live "on Earth" like

some alien visitor, but rather that we are part of Earth, just as a volcano or river is part of Earth and its cycles.

We are earth, with carbon, nitrogen and phosphorus making up our bodies one day, and incorporated into mountains the next. We are air, giving food to the trees and grasses when we exhale, and breathing in their gift of free oxygen with each breath. We are fire, burning the energy of the Sun, captured and given to us by plants. We are water, with the oceans flowing in our veins and the same water that nourished the dinosaurs within our cells.

We are connected to our families, through links of love, to their relatives, and so on to the entire human species. Our family tree goes back further than the rise of humans, including all mammals, all animals, and all life on Earth. The entire Earth is our immense and joyous family reunion.

We feel these connections in a spiritual way. The web of life includes strands that tug on our hearts, thread through our essential nature, and weave us into a spiritual whole. As part of the body of life on Earth, we care about the health of all parts of the body. Many human activities destroy parts of the body, and we recoil at them. Cutting down a rainforest is no different from cutting off a healthy leg or arm. In fact, these are even more vital than our arms and legs, because these forests are part of our planetary lungs. Similarly, we care about our waters, our land, our air, and our diverse biosphere. We do so out of respect for our ancestors, out of care for all life today, and out of love for future generations. Anything that harms the body of life on Earth, including global warming, pollution and extinction, is thus a spiritual and moral issue.

We are part of Earth, and Earth is part of us.

How we are damaging the ecosystem

Humanity's actions are radically altering the web of life of which we are a component, threatening the lives of many species, *Homo sapiens* included. This harm takes many forms. Habitat loss continues as consumption increases. Deforestation alone destroys some 150 thousand square kilometers each year, the size of Japan — equivalent to 24 football fields every minute.

Global warming caused by our emission of greenhouse gases has already contributed to sea level rise, ocean acidification, and increased floods and droughts, with more severe effects expected within this century. Additional damage can be seen from ozone depletion. Our actions also have resulted in an ongoing and unsustainable depletion of resources, including minerals, food sources and usable water, generating increasing amounts of pollution. Other harm in addition to these is likely to be found in the future as we continue to learn about the impact of human activities on our world.

What we can do

Since Earth is able to heal itself, we need to stop doing harm, and let the healing begin. However, this is not as simple as it sounds. Our global systems of exploitation are not easily dismantled.

There are certain actions we can take now. It is important for each individual, community, and nation to take stock of what that means for the betterment of the whole. Technical solutions can never move forward without political will, and the necessary political will requires a shift in our most deeply held values, in our very definitions of what it means to be human, and in how humanity relates to the world. We recognize this shift as a spiritual imperative.

It is a collective challenge, and individual actions are necessary but not sufficient. Therefore we must build a culture of true sustainability. This does not mean trying to find ways to “sustain” our current levels of consumption or trying to “sustain” economic and political systems which have failed us. Rather, building a truly sustainable culture means transforming the systems of domination and exploitation that threaten our future into systems of symbiotic partnership that support our ecosystem. We must be clear about our agenda, which includes promoting sustainable, local economies, reforming our food systems, distributing resources in a more just and humane fashion, and ensuring that our human populations are below the carrying capacity of our planet through access to voluntary birth control, and equal access to education and work for women.

Any economic or political system which encourages the exploitation of Earth and people must be dismantled or substantially reformed. This includes any system based on endless growth. We should be operating in a closed loop system, not a

linear one. This means moving away from disposable development and culture, and moving toward renewable development and culture wherein all products are intended for longevity, repairability, and easy recycling or composting at the end of their use. The sustainable economy of the future will be one with the shortest distances between production, consumption and recycling of byproducts.

In addition, there is a deeper and more profound change that is needed. Fundamentally, we believe that a change in spirit is required, one that fosters a new relationship between humanity and other species and Earth as a whole. As Pagans, we believe we are well situated to help imagine and create a future in which humanity lives in greater harmony with the rest of our planet. We strive in our worship, work, play, and daily lives to connect to this greater harmony. We believe that recognizing our connection as part of Earth itself is a unique facet of what defines us. Pagans can aid in the repair of our environment by teaching how we are part of life on Earth, sharing rituals and ceremonies that foster bonds between ourselves and the rest of the web of life, and instilling a sense of responsibility for how we interact with the ecosystem — all this creating cultures that can sustain our human society today and for generations to come.

As signatories, we commit to use our abilities and resources to promote policies and practices that foster the changes that our world so urgently needs. We will continue to educate members of our community to foster intelligent and focused sustainable living, and help the world recognize that everyone, whether Pagan or not, is part of our precious Earth. We hold that living a fulfilling and meaningful life, and allowing the same for future generations, is only possible if the entire Earth is healthy. We will therefore strive as individuals, as groups, and as members of a global society to promote the current and future health of our entire Earth, including the water, air, land, and the web of life.

Earth Day 2015

(For a list of signatories or to sign the statement on your own behalf or on behalf of a group or organization, visit www.ecopagan.com.)