

2 An organization called the Greening Earth Society recently began flooding U.S. media with the message that carbon dioxide emissions from motor vehicles and coal-burning power plants—the main greenhouse warming gases—are *good* for the planet, because plants need CO₂ for growth! This is a little like saying that if one capsule a day of vitamin A is good for your eyesight, a bottleful will make you a visionary. In fact, it will only make you dead. The Greening Earth Society is a front organization for the U.S. coal industry, and by repeating this mind-numbing message, it has created a blithe impression that global warming would mean a lush world of emerald lawns and blooming gardens.

Nothing could be further from the truth, of course. Climate scientists have warned that warming will alter oceanic and atmospheric currents and precipitate more intense and frequent “extreme weather events”—more hurricanes, floods, heat waves, and droughts. And in the past three years, we’ve already seen some disturbing signs: the immense damage wreaked by Hurricane Mitch; the vast fires sweeping tropical forests from Indonesia to the Amazon (tropical forests *don’t burn naturally*, the way U.S. temperate forests do); and the crippling droughts that struck Texas in 1998 and much of North America in the summer of ’99.

WORLD WATCH has tracked these events in a way no other magazine has. A recent issue, for example, graphed the worldwide economic cost of weather disasters for the past half century, showing that global damages averaged under \$2 billion per year for decades, then in the 1990s began skyrocketing—to \$15 billion, \$36 billion, \$60 billion, and then in 1998 to more than \$90 billion.

But **WORLD WATCH** also goes further, showing how warming interacts with other critical phenomena, including rising human population, unsustainable consumption, falling water tables, and a rate of extinction of species that biologists surveyed by New York’s Museum of Natural History say is even faster than the extinction in which the dinosaurs died.

That’s the big-picture view, but we also look at what these changes will mean for every aspect of life in our own time. We look closely at *what industries will rise or fall* (don’t invest in oil, but do consider investing in the coming hydrogen economy); at *how we will design our houses* (forget that trophy home in the exurbs); at *what we will do for transportation* (move closer to work, for one thing); and at *what we will eat* (don’t count on always having meat). And, we provide clear guidelines for getting safely from here to there.

WORLD WATCH articles aren’t just broad-brush, big-picture views of our future, however. Drawn from the research of leading experts worldwide, our writing is rich in details you won’t find in any other highly readable magazine:

- ◆ In a recent article titled *Virtual Disconnect*, environmental historian Aaron Sachs revealed that the reputation of high-tech enterprises as the “clean” industries of the post-manufacturing future is ominously misleading. Behind its pristine office-park facades, Silicon Valley has turned itself into the worst Superfund toxic waste site in the United States.
- ◆ In *Why Share?* Worldwatch Institute senior researcher Gary Gardner shows that the unrestrained rush toward commercial privatization of all things poses a fundamental threat to human society, by eroding priceless public commons and shared assets. After all, these assets include not only our libraries, museums, parks, and roads, but the shared knowledge and shared values on which civilization is based.