

By Tom Schuman

Meaning of Green

Taking Root in Indiana's Landscape

Who knew a five-letter, one-syllable word – green – could be so complex. But then again, consider the following:

- There are the greens we're happy to see – green light, green thumb, greener pastures and greenbacks, to name a few
- The meanings aren't so pleasant with a green-eyed monster, being green with envy, too green (inexperienced) for the job or when someone says you look green (and pale)
- Even the color is not simply known as green. You have variations in chartreuse, lime, olive, emerald, jade, teal and about a dozen other shades

But we're talking green and the environment. The two have been closely linked – most vividly through images of tall, powerful trees and lush bushes. How could there be ambiguity in that? Enter Al Gore. While he may not have been the founder of the green movement (think back to his comments about the origins of the Internet and insert joke here), he brought an unforeseen amount of attention to the topic with the 2006 documentary "An Inconvenient Truth." The premise in a few words: Humans are causing global warming, and the effects are devastating. Over the last few years, media focus on the environment and our collective responsibility has escalated, with "going green," "carbon footprint" and "sustainability," among others, becoming common terms. There are very passionate believers – evidence to follow – on one side of the fence, but also more than a few people on the other side whose only "green" concern is the dollars needed to run their business or take care of their family.

All green, all the time

Environmental supporters and activists have been making predictions for many years about the demise of our natural resources. What might be characterized as small, but vocal protests in the past have become part of the mainstream.

Indiana businesses are paying attention. Companies of all types are touting their green programs or initiatives in record numbers. Why? Because they have determined that is what their customers want. Anecdotal evidence: In 10 years of this publication, there has been no greater response from the business community than when it was announced that *BizVoice*® was “going green” for this issue. Phone calls, e-mails, press releases and a few other forms of outreach came in from organizations wanting to tell their “green” story.

The public is also taking notice. Businesses claiming to be “green” without the ability to back it up are being called out. A recent national survey found 75% of men and 65% of women responding that labeling a product green is just a marketing tactic. The Federal Trade Commission has launched a review of its green guidelines, following what agency attorneys called “a proliferation of green claims in the marketplace.”

“Greenwashing” is defined as the act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service. In a study titled the “Six Sins of Greenwashing,” TerraChoice Environmental Marketing examined more than 1,000 consumer products. According to the report, “all but one made claims that are demonstrably false or that risk misleading intended audiences.” (See the sidebar on Page 10 for more on the six sins).

Radar levels are on the rise. When the Indiana Chamber,

Indiana Job Opportunities for the Green Economy*

- 24,000 carpenters to make buildings more energy efficient
- 15,000 electricians to expand mass transit solutions
- 25,000 operations managers to manufacture energy-efficient automobiles
- 15,000 machinists to craft essential components for wind power
- 12,000 welders vital to solar power manufacturing
- 22,000 industrial truck drivers to transport supplies and fuels for the cellulosic biofuels sector

*Report issued in June by the Blue Green Alliance, led by the United Steelworkers and the Sierra Club

as the administrative arm of the Economic Club of Indiana, promoted Steven Hayward as its April speaker, the response was swift. Hayward can be briefly described as the anti-Al Gore, with the hypothesis that human actions are having, at best, a minimal impact on global warming and the environment.

The Economic Club was doing what it has done so well for the past 35 years – delivering a thought-provoking speaker to stimulate discussion. One respondent, however, offered the opinion that instead of “enlightening its membership,” the Economic Club was “contributing to the irrational polarization of our society by providing a venue for the biased, dogmatic and extremist views that those speakers advocate.”

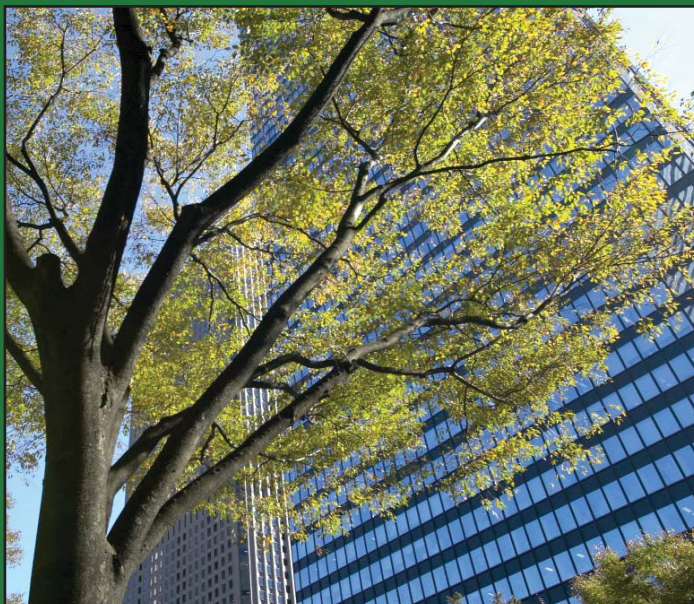
Members speak out

BizVoice® contacted a number of Chamber members, including several who were adamantly opposed to the Hayward appearance. The result: very strong opinions, ones that undoubtedly represent the views of many others.

Rosemary Spaulding runs a small Indianapolis law firm, which “recycles everything, even shredded paper.” She is active on the development organization in the neighborhood where she works and lives, with that group creating a recognition program for green initiatives.

She says she fondly remembers the first Earth Day, adding, “I don’t like to seem overly dramatic, but I feel we have to do something ... about the impact humans collectively have on climate change. People say, ‘What can I as one person do?’ But if everyone tries to do some things, I think it will have a dramatic impact.”

Spaulding notes that while information on recycling and other programs is more readily available today, a lack of communication



Largest Per-capita Carbon Footprints Among the Nation’s Biggest Metro Areas

1. Lexington-Fayette, Kentucky
2. Indianapolis
3. Cincinnati-Middletown, Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana
4. Toledo, Ohio
5. Louisville, Kentucky-Indiana

Smallest Per-capita Carbon Footprints Among the Nation’s Biggest Metro Areas

1. Honolulu
2. Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, California
3. Portland-Vancouver-Beaverton, Oregon-Washington
4. New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, New York-New Jersey-Pennsylvania
5. Boise City-Nampa, Idaho

Source: The Brookings Institution



Energy emissions are a focus of increasing scrutiny and regulation.

has been at the core of some of the challenges. She cites solid waste disposal (cheaper to throw items in landfills) and combined sewer overflows (delaying the needed public investments) as areas in which the full story was never told.

“We’ve been spoiled. The long-term costs have been hidden,” she claims. “If people truly understood the real costs to the environment and human health – we might be gaining a few pennies but paying a premium in other ways.”

Todd Barton is controller and treasurer for Crawford Industries in Crawfordsville. Energy is at the top of his list of concerns.

“Indiana is one of the dirtiest states in air quality because all the power plants burn coal,” he states. “Our company met with our local utility to see what some other options are, and there are not many.

The costs are real, to health care and the environment, and we need to recognize that and take action.”

He acknowledges that clean coal technology would be better, but adds that the contribution to carbon dioxide in the air is far less desirable than investments and enhancement in wind, solar and other technologies. He terms the refusal of the Legislature to pass a renewable portfolio standard (requiring utilities to offer a certain percentage of their power from renewable sources) “erring too much on the side of caution.”

On the other side

Others are more than content watching the green bandwagon pass them by. After a clear telephone explanation of our publication and this issue, more people than not (contacted at random) opted to:

- (a) not return our phone calls
- (b) politely say “thanks, but no thanks” to discussing the topic either on a company or personal level
- (c) differ with the prevailing viewpoint

Only one respondent was willing to let us use his/her comments. This business owner offers the following: never heard of the term greenwashing, believes some of the green movement is “kind of fanatical,” is “not sold” on global warming, recalls reading from NASA experts that the climate is cooling more than warming and notes that “you can change statistics around to get what you want.”

The person adds it would be nice to have a cleaner alternative source of fuel, but that right now the focus is on diesel prices, which are “the lifeline of our company.”

At the state level

What about in the public domain? Two recent listings suggest Indiana has its work cut out for it.

In an America’s Greenest States special in *Forbes* magazine, topping the rankings were Vermont, Oregon and Washington. Indiana was 49th, ahead of only West Virginia. The editor’s comments included: “(Indiana) had the sixth highest carbon footprint of any state, and four of its metro areas are listed by the American Lung Association as having bad smog problems, and one with an ozone pollution problem.” In addition, the magazine ranked Indiana’s water quality as better than only four other states.

Coastal areas also dominated a *Popular Science* ranking of the 50 “greenest cities.” There were no Indiana sightings. The criteria included use of alternative energy, transit and carpooling, green building techniques and waste recycling.

So, are we solving the green debate on these pages? Of course not. What follows, however, are stories about green programs and initiatives in companies and communities from around the state. We do feel, however, that we are stimulating the discussion – and we, like others, are anxious to see where the green road leads.

Six Sins of Greenwashing

1. **Sin of the Hidden Trade-Off:** suggesting a product is green based on a single environmental attribute without attention to other more important environmental issues. Common to this category: paper, office technology, detergents and cleaning products
2. **Sin of No Proof:** any environmental claim that cannot be substantiated by easily accessible supporting information or by a reliable third-party certification. Examples: household lighting, personal care products and facial tissues/paper towels
3. **Sin of Vagueness:** every claim that is so poorly defined or broad that its real meaning is likely to be misunderstood by the intended consumer. Terms include “chemical free,” “non-toxic,” “all natural” and “green”
4. **Sin of Irrelevance:** a claim that may be truthful but is unimportant and unhelpful for consumers seeking environmentally preferable products. Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) have been banned for 30 years; thus, CFC-free claims are meaningless
5. **Sin of Lesser of Two Evils:** claims that may be true within the product category, but that risk distracting the consumer from the greater environmental impacts of the category as a whole. Organic cigarettes and green insecticides and herbicides are placed in this category
6. **Sin of Fibbing:** making environmental claims that are simply false. These were rare, only found in 10 of the more than 1,000 products analyzed

Source: TerraChoice Environmental Marketing