

SAN JACINTO RIVER AUTHORITY KIDS PAGE

What is SUSTAINABILITY and How Does it Affect YOU?



Sometimes new words come into our vocabulary...or old words take on a new meaning -- which is the case with SUSTAINABILITY. The dictionary says that the root word, *sustain*, means to last or endure. That's simple enough. So, sustainability, then is the ability to continue or survive.

Today, the word is increasingly used to refer to what will be required for planet Earth to *sustain* all of its resources to be able to provide a home for humans and animals and plants...forever. A lot of changes have occurred over the past 100 years that have impacted our environment -- natural disasters such as volcanic eruptions, hurricanes and floods; man-made and natural air and water pollution; and depletion of some of our natural resources like groundwater. People are searching for sustainable solutions to problems, which means finding solutions that work well now and into the future for the long-term.

One of the important things to think about is where the products and services that you buy or use come from. Where do the "leftovers" from these items go? What impact does your use of these products or services have on our overall environment? On other humans and animals and plants? Can these products be recycled or reused? And, do you take the time to make recycling a habit?

When you think about these important issues, consider the resources that are used to manufacture things that you use. Are these resources *renewable* or *non-renewable*? Renewable resources are those that can be restored or regenerated naturally as fast or faster than they are used.

Many business leaders have decided that sustainability matters very much, and they have chosen not to use so much extra packaging on their products that just ends up in landfills. The production of energy uses both renewable and non-renewable resources, and *what goes around comes around*, so to speak. We used to rely on windmills to bring water up to the surface for use by settlers and animals during the frontier days. Today, giant turbines are catching the wind to produce millions of kilowatt hours of electricity.

And just about everywhere on our planet, people are realizing that our precious water resources are not being replaced as fast as we are using them, and that we need to balance meeting the water needs of current and future users while protecting and sustaining the natural systems that provide it.

There is something people of all ages can do to help and that is to change wasteful habits and behaviors when it comes to water use. Remember, the water we conserve today can serve us tomorrow! ■