

## It's The Environment! Rio in 2012

Yes, there was an Earth Summit in Rio 20 years ago, and several before 1992, and one in 2002, so the notion that the Earth Summit this week is the second one is just not so, and dismisses the hard work of dedicated people around the world. But that issue is a diversion from the real point here- We've Only Just Begun.

That's right, as much progress as it seems that we humans in modern society have made in how we live on Earth, there is so much more to do. Students of environmental studies can take heart in the fact that governments and businesses now make all sorts of decisions to protect the environment, requiring environmental experts in the fields of biology, finance, geology, law, chemistry, mathematics, to name a few. Just a few years ago, news reports about the environment were not an every-day occurrence; now such stories are commonplace. In today's world, most organizations of all types have staff or groups to deal with environmental aspects of their work and mission.

Some problems, however, remain nearly intractable or simply too nasty to tackle, including justice and equity; stormwater runoff; chemical use, modern life styles and contaminated sediments. We'll address these problems one at a time over the next few weeks, not attempting to cover all at once, thereby diluting the attention to each. These 5 problem areas are not the only ones needing attention and some others may seem grander or more pressing. These 5 are the ones that come to mind as we start to examine the questions that delegates to the 2012 Earth Summit will be considering in the coming days. Our collective responsibility is to keep on moving the discussion and maintain progress.

For now- it's good to acknowledge the fruits of the Earth at the start of summer, on the summer solstice in the Northern Hemisphere. The season of farmer's markets is in full swing - strawberries are giving way to blueberries and blackberries. Crisp green beans replace the peas and scallions. Squash and cucumbers abound, corn is coming in and the early tomatoes now grace the market baskets and soon our tables. Fresh fish, shrimp and crabs come to us from the rivers and coastal seas. If we can be responsible, the Earth is a bountiful place.

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