



# Reconnect with your environment

Learn about environmental issues, their affect on your community and actions for your involvement.



## What do you apply to your face, hands?

By ANNA McCARTNEY  
Contributing writer

Would you wash your hair with formaldehyde or sanitize your hands with pesticides? If you don't read product labels, you might be doing just that.

The organizational leadership/sustainability studies graduate program at Mercyhurst University has partnered with Pennsylvania Sea Grant to launch Fresh Face Forward, a yearlong campaign to raise awareness on campus about toxic chemicals that can be found in many cosmetics and personal care products (PCPs).

To shed light on the issue, a team of graduate students led by associate professor Anne Zaphiris, Ph.D., developed Fresh Face Forward in hopes of changing habits of young consumers. A 2013 survey of Mercyhurst students ranging in age from 18-24 revealed that, on average, young women use 11 personal care products daily, while young men use seven.

The Fresh Face Forward team aims to increase awareness among college students about this issue by 40 percent during the 2013-14 academic year. "What you put on your body impacts your health and the environment, but this issue hasn't become mainstream because we're not talking about it enough," said Zaphiris.

The campaign includes lectures and guest speakers, educational posters and displays, a weekly col-



Amanda Martin

Alyssa Litton

umn called "Beauty Talks," and "No Makeup Mondays," where faculty, staff and students pledge to go makeup-free every Monday during the academic year. The team has also compiled a recipe book of homemade beauty and personal-care products.

Students involved include graduate students Elissa Reitz, Alyssa Littin, Amanda Martin and Javi Cubillos Caroca; undergraduate Leann Krysiak, a communications major; and sustainability officer Brittany Prischak. Courtney Olevnik, a graduate of the organizational leadership program, and Valentina Carrillo, a graphic design major, also contributed to the campaign.

For more information, visit [freshfaceforward.org](http://freshfaceforward.org) to find educational information about the top 15 toxic chemicals to avoid, student blogs and suggestions for safe alternatives. Funding comes from a Great Lakes Sea Grant Network award from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative of the U.S.

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NASA

Pinpoint where you live. Whether it's near a coast or hundreds of miles inland, the water cycle connects you to the ocean and all the water in rivers, lakes, under ground and in the atmosphere. A fixed amount of water goes around the Earth in a perpetual cycle to keep us alive but the activities of an exponentially growing population are bringing this complex water ecosystem to the brink of collapse.

## Into the deep end

### We have oceans of information about protecting water supply

By ANNA McCARTNEY  
Contributing writer

No matter where you live, your activities determine whether the water that has sustained life for millions of years will continue to nourish future generations.

You are connected to every drop of water and every living thing in this complex life-support system. Protecting them is easier if we start with the big picture of the Earth's greatest resource.

We are all dependent on the ocean and connected to it through the water cycle (the subject of the Oct. 1, 2013, NIE Environment page). The ocean plays a critical role in recycling water and in regulating Earth's weather and climate. It also provides most of our oxygen and is home to extraordinarily diverse plants and animals that provide important food and medicines.

Images of Earth from space clearly show only one ocean. Although the ocean is large, it is finite and freshwater is limited. The continuous oceanic saltwater pool that covers most of the planet contains 97 percent of Earth's water. Freshwater makes up only three percent. Two-thirds of this is locked up in glaciers and icecaps, leaving less than 1 percent to support humans and plants and animals that can't survive on saltwater.

However, pressures on aquatic systems are mounting worldwide in response to the growing population and their need for drinking water, irrigation and energy. Because these global problems all start at the local level, our greatest hope

lies with the public whose actions can play a crucial role in protecting the water cycle, the world ocean and the freshwater that leads to an incredibly diverse web of life.

Poor land use includes excess development, fossil fuel extraction, aging wastewater treatment plants and other practices that lead to pollution, erosion and flooding, which create problems downstream and eventually the ocean.

But there are solutions to these problems.

We can restore and protect disappearing coastal wetlands that act as filtration systems to protect the ocean from pollution. We can also protect communities from rising sea levels and storms. Much can be done to limit dead zones in both the Gulf of Mexico and Lake Erie. These dead zones are growing larger each year. And we can stop pumping more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere by replacing fossil fuels with other forms of energy to keep the ocean from becoming too acidic for marine life. Working together, we can also protect fisheries that once seemed endless but are now reaching the brink of collapse because of overfishing and pollution.

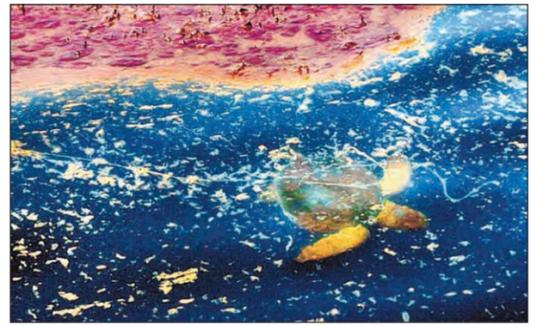
In coming weeks, we will zoom in from the big picture to snapshots of local tributaries and what you can do and what others are doing to protect all the water that keeps us alive.

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ANNA McCARTNEY/Contributed photo

Land-based sources account for about 80 percent of marine pollution, globally. Plastic and other trash, agricultural runoff, nutrients, pesticides, oil spills and untreated sewage all eventually affect the ocean.



NOAA

Fossil fuels are increasingly more difficult to extract and the risk of catastrophic events like the BP oil spill in the Gulf and other spills on land are adding up to serious problems for wildlife and people.



NOAA

Dilution is not the solution to pollution. Fish, birds, dolphins and other wildlife are killed or their health declines when oil spills, hurricanes, floods and other chemical discharges unleash oil and other dangerous toxins into the water.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Union City High School students collect trash and data on school grounds for the International Coastal Cleanup.

## Trash collection helps to keep waterways clean

By ANNA McCARTNEY  
Contributing writer

Among the nine bags of trash collected by 20 Union City High School students, there were three disposable diapers and lots of other single-use items, including plastic bottles and beverage cans, food wrappers, containers and utensils.

All the trash they collected in a one-mile area around the school will be kept from entering area waterways. The data they collected will be added to the results of the International Coastal Cleanup effort in northwest Pennsylvania and sent to Washington, D.C., where this information will be combined with international results. The goal is to use the data to find solutions to the trash problems that plague area

waterways and the ocean.

Union City High School teacher Raquel Gray is one of nine Erie County teachers participating in the PA Sea Grant BWET project, which promotes locally relevant, experiential learning and stewardship projects for K-12 school students and teachers.

The school cleanup was the first of two stewardship projects the students will be conducting. Throughout the year, Gray and her students will incorporate watershed stewardship practices in the classroom, out in the field and in the water, and in the community.

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- [www.oceanservice.noaa.gov](http://www.oceanservice.noaa.gov)
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- [www.nationalgeographic.com/ocean/](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/ocean/)
- [www.oceanconservancy.org/](http://www.oceanconservancy.org/)
- [www.paseagrants.org](http://www.paseagrants.org)



Degraded water doesn't stay put, and that water eventually creates problems in the ocean.

Are there any issues brewing in your community that are threatening water quality or quantity? Read the daily newspaper to find out. Then share your ideas to let adults know why they need to be more protective of water. Send them to [axm40@psu.edu](mailto:axm40@psu.edu).

