

**It's Up To All of Us**  
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Most of the limelight at the climate conference in Kyoto last week went to conflicts over who should be held responsible for the Earth's environmental ills. Developing countries paired off against developed nations, environmentalists against business interests. In the end, few people seemed to be satisfied.

So where do we go from here? Many people both in the public and private sectors already have acknowledged the obvious: They can't rely on international treaties and large-scale negotiations. And these people are moving voluntarily in their communities and businesses to make changes, often in conjunction with non-profit and government agencies.

"There are significant programs that the Department of Energy and the EPA already have in place that will be expanded to help meet these commitments(to reduce greenhouse gas emissions) — government-private partnerships," said Amber Jones, with the media office of the DOE. These include research and cost-reducing programs to promote solar roofs, alternate fuel vehicles and energy-efficient buildings and appliances. A recent study by the DOE, Jones said, shows that businesses, industry and consumers over the long run will save money by investing in energy-efficient, clean technology. And at the same time significantly reduce greenhouse gases.

Businessmen like Richard A. Abdo, chairman and executive officer of Wisconsin Electric Power Company, already are proving that point. He has committed his company to reducing greenhouse gases 16 percent by the year 2000. His strategy includes technological improvements in both generating and distributing electricity, as well as waste-to-energy projects.

"One of my strongest beliefs is that you can do the right thing, and do it cost effectively," Abdo said in an interview for The Nature Conservancy. "We have to break out of the old command-and-control regulatory paradigm."

In addition to what he's doing at home, Abdo also brought his company into the U.S. Initiative on Joint Implementation, a volunteer program administered by the federal government that helps companies invest in international projects to reduce, avoid or capture carbon emissions. Twenty-four of these projects are now in progress, but Abdo was involved in one of the first — the Rio Bravo Project in Belize. Developed by The Nature Conservancy working with a local partner, Programme for Belize, this project secured 14,400 acres of threatened forests and funded a sustainable forestry program. Wisconsin Electric Power, along with Cinergy, PacificCorp, Utilitree and Detroit Edison, gave \$2.6 million to fund the project. The acreage is expected to capture 3 million tons of atmospheric carbon dioxide over four decades.

Under the agreement in Kyoto, the United States cannot use programs such as Rio Bravo to reach its new 14-year goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 7 percent from 1990 levels — that issue will be discussed again next year at a conference in Argentina. But business leaders like Abdo, who grew up in the Great Lakes region, aren't in it just to earn carbon credits.

"Depending on the season, I'm not just a chairman and chief executive officer," he said. "I'm also a fisherman, a naturalist and a hiker.... When you grow up enjoying clean air and water and the pristine beauty of nature, you notice what happens when people don't protect it."

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