



Not everyone happy with Earth Day

Michael McGuire

April 20, 2012

Has Earth Day become so commercialized that it's lost the meaning its founders had? Has it become a secular version of Christmas, with ties to commercial products rather than ties to Mother Earth?

Have doubts about climate change taken some of the wind out of Earth Day's sails?

Some activists on all sides have had reservations about Earth Day for several years.

"Climate change, desertification and loss of biodiversity pose an unequivocal challenge for human development," said UN General Assembly President Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, in a statement for Earth Day 2012 that is sure to raise the hackles of conservatives who doubt climate change pronouncements.

"Conserving our environment is a laudable goal, but there are better ways to do it than using hysteria to scare people into accepting draconian laws and regulations," said the [Heritage Foundation](#), a conservative think tank.

"It is businessmen — not bureaucrats or environmental activists — who deserve most of the credit for the environmental gains over the past century and who represent the best hope for a Greener tomorrow," said the libertarian [Cato Institute](#).

Many environmentalists are equally critical.

"We are talking about some of the world's largest environmental bad actors from big oil giants like Chevron to big agribusiness like Cargill disingenuously spinning their products and policies as environmentally friendly," Rebecca Tarbotton wrote in a 2010 [Huffington Post](#) opinion piece. "I may be stepping out on a limb here, but when companies have a business model that relies on cutting down the world's last remaining rainforests, scraping the bottom of the dirty oil barrel, poisoning our air and drinking water or jeopardizing our climate Earth Day is not their day."

The same year, Alex Steffen and Sarah Rich penned [Make This Earth Day Your Last!](#)

"Earth Day is rapidly becoming a firestorm of gestural shopping," they argued. "Marketers today will shamelessly slap the 'green' label on nearly anything, including things that are demonstrably stupid and ecologically steps backwards -- Hello? A solar-powered bikini? WTF? -- encouraging us to mistake shopping therapy for strategic consumption. We've said it before, and we'll say it here again: you can't shop your way to sustainability, and we can do better."

Critics to the contrary, Earth Day lives and will be celebrated again on April 22. How alive it is will be known then.