

Twelve ways to a greener Christmas

By TERI WYLY

A SUN HERALD FORUM

I have been trying to start a few new and greener holiday traditions. Although we may be searching for or buying our child a coveted PlayStation 3, we secretly yearn for the simpler days of a partridge in a pear tree as an appreciated gift.

I'd like to propose 12 reasonably simple ways we might make Mississippi a better, cleaner and greener state. All of these changes are achievable, using existing technologies readily available today. Some will require developing partnerships and dialogue where now there is none. Others will simply require doing things we already do... just a bit differently, or smarter

1. What if we restored nonfunctioning wetlands by using them as a secondary treatment for wastewater filtration? This would expand our wetlands and reduce treatment costs.
2. What if we expand the use of clean-coal technologies, through the use of coal-gasification technology currently being championed by Mississippi Power, thus reducing emissions and remaining reliant on a locally mined lignite coal from Kemper County, Mississippi.
3. What if our resurgent gaming industry became "best practices" leaders in energy conservation, LEED certification and green building?
4. What if Mississippi's long-established timber industry also became a U.S. leader in ethanol (alternative fuel) production?
4. What if our GO Zone and related Gulf Coast rebuilding and redevelopment tax incentives were expanded to reward the use of alternative energy and conservation?
6. What if Mississippi's research engines were turned full bore onto the issues of developing alternative energy sources, making the region a leader in this industry, much as we now lead in petro-chemical refinement and production?
7. What if all re-building, re-zoning and renewed construction along our Gulf Coast required hurricane-proof construction standards and the adoption of the Smart Code for the Gulf Region?
8. What if we substantially expand the practice of recycling our Christmas trees into artificial reefs to reduce beachfront erosion and remove these over-dried evergreens from our waste stream?
9. What if we improve the awareness of LEED Certification and "Green Building" among consumers as well as the development community. We can help transfer this knowledge of home energy cost savings, and a quicker recovery of those costs for consumers.
10. What if we expand the use of capturing methane gas from public and private landfills for use and burning as a clean energy source? This generates revenue for cities and counties (which need to dispose of the methane), and also improves air quality by reducing emissions from burning other less-clean sources of electricity.
11. What if we auction off the natural gas production rights offshore in the Mississippi Gulf to large energy producers and the private sector, to help finance the re-building of the Gulf Coast?

12.What if we had the Mississippi state bird, the mockingbird, replace the partridges in all those pear trees?

At least one of these wishes for a greener future should also cause a bright smile. Best wishes for the season and new year!

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