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"I saw that there was nothing to stop me from trying to think about our total planet Earth and thinking realistically about how to operate it on an enduringly sustainable basis as the magnificent human-passengered spaceship that it is."

-R. Buckminster Fuller

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Trends and Perspectives

Clean Van Runs On 'Soap'

A motor company has developed a van which runs on a substance similar to soap.

The Chrysler vehicle converts borax to electrical power through an on-board fuel cell. Borax is chemically similar to household soap. Chrysler says it has to iron out several problems before the van goes on sale. Jason Mark, a transport analyst with the Union of Concerned Scientists, says: "It's encouraging news." The Natrium van concept vehicle is being unveiled at a meeting of the Electric Vehicle Association in California.

http://www.ananova.com/news/story/sm_471872.html

(Source: [Ananova.com](#))

100% Biodegradable Plastic from Renewable Resources

Conventional plastics are made from petrochemicals, which pose environmental disposal problems. A new biodegradable plastic is created using polylactides, an organic product formed by the fermentation of carbohydrates, which produces lactic acid. The lactic acid is transformed into a polymer, which breaks down into environmentally safe elements and are then completely metabolized by normal soil microflora in a short period of time. Once exposed to light, humidity, oxygen, and soil microorganisms, polylactide plastics convert into humus, carbon dioxide, and water.

http://www.yet2.com/app/insight/techofweek/20001210_fortum

(Source: [Yet2.com](#))

IBM'S 3-Atom-Thick "Pixie Dust" For Disks Will Let Hard Drives Quadruple Storage

IBM announced Monday that it is using just a few atoms of "pixie dust" to push back the data storage industry's most formidable barrier. The company is first to mass-produce computer hard disk drives using a revolutionary new type of magnetic coating that is eventually expected to quadruple the data density of current hard disk drive products—a level previously thought to be impossible, but crucial to continue feeding the information-hungry Internet economy. For consumers, increased data density will help hasten the transition in home entertainment from passive analog technologies to interactive digital formats.

http://www.smalltimes.com/document_display.cfm?document_id=1299

(Source: Small Times)

Huge Satellite Goes Into Orbit

The largest and most expensive satellite ever built by Europe blasted off in March, beginning its mission to monitor the environmental health of Planet Earth. The environmental satellite, or Envisat, was launched from French Guiana into orbit about 500 miles above the surface of the Earth, where it will circle the planet every 100 minutes. Envisat's mission is to collect vital data on how Earth's land, oceans, ice caps, and atmosphere are changing. The information will be analyzed by scientists and used to help establish European environmental policy. The program's sponsors called it a powerful symbol of the strength of a united Europe, and Jose Achache, director of the Earth Observation program for the European Space Agency, said the mission would enable scientists and environmentalists "to trace the smallest changes to the Earth's surface anywhere on the globe."

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/sci/tech/newsid_1847000/1847987.stm

(Source: Daily Grist/BBC News)

Smelly White Fungus Could Help Farmers and the Environment

Researchers at Montana State University say a stinky fungus from Honduras may provide farmers with an alternative to an effective but ozone-damaging soil fumigant.

http://enn.com/news/wire-stories/2002/03/03192002/ap_46708.asp

(Source: Environmental News Network)

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Resources

Great Transition: The Promise And Lure Of The Times Ahead

The Global Scenario Group (GSG) has published a fascinating new report based on their exhilarating exploration of the global past, present and future. The GSG was convened in 1995 by the Stockholm Environment Institute as a diverse and international body to examine the requirements for a transition to sustainability.

The preface asserts: "The global transition has begun—a planetary society will take shape over the coming decades. But its outcome is in question. Current trends set the direction of departure for the journey, not its destination... While it may seem improbable, a transition to a future of enriched lives, human solidarity and a healthy planet is possible. This is the story elaborated in these pages."

http://www.tellus.org/seib/publications/Great_Transitions.pdf

Environmental Inquiry

The mission of Environmental Inquiry (EI) is to support teaching and learning about the environmental sciences through teacher education, curriculum research and development, and scientific inquiry by students and teachers in grades 7-16. This site offers resources to aid development of meaningful research projects in the areas of toxicology, watersheds, ecology and biodegradation.

<http://ei.cornell.edu/>

Synergetics Now Online As .PDF Files

You can now access Fuller's complete integrated "Synergetics, Explorations in the Geometry of Thinking" and "Synergetics 2" as .PDF files. Thanks to Bob Gray for his dedicated hard work to make this available.

Visit <http://www.rwgrayprojects.com/synergetics/synergetics.html>

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Events

EnvironDesign6

April 3 - 5, 2002

Washington State Trade & Convention Center
Seattle, WA

One of the world's leading sustainable design and business conferences, EnvironDesign has enjoyed spectacular growth since its inception in 1997. It features a dynamic combination of world-class keynote sessions, workshops and site tours, as well as a Product Learning Center that showcases the pro-environmental initiatives of manufacturers and NGOs from a broad range of industries.

This is the final week for pre-registration.

<http://www.isdesignet.com/ED/index.html>

The First Wild School Awards:

Celebrating rare and profound achievements by individuals who have made exciting and valued contributions to our communities

April 13, 2002

Dearborn, Michigan

At the Henry Ford Museum at Greenfield Village

<http://www.hfmqv.org> (home of Fuller's Dymaxion House)

Awards Recipients:

- Buckminster Fuller — inventor, poet, mathematician, dreamer.
- Paul Winter — grammy-award winning composer and musician.
- Susan Collin Marks & John Marks — social justice activists, founders of Search For Common Ground.
- Elizabeth Grossman — supervising attorney for Equal Employment Opportunity & alumna of UHS.

5:30 p.m. Auction

7:00 p.m. Dinner

8:00 p.m. Awards Presentation

Entertainment by Paul Winter, Eugene Friesen, & Upland Hills School Children

Initiated by, hosted by and a benefit for Upland Hills School where the focus is on an education of exuberance, vitality and joy. Encouraging students to think in the broadest terms about what is possible, about varied types of genius, about unconditioned, expressive, unrestrained education, about the independent, unique journeys of each individual.

<http://www.uplandhills.org> / 248-693-2878/ info@uplandhills.org

The Natural Step 2002 Conference

May 9-11, 2002

San Francisco, California

The 2002 conference, "Innovation and Inspiration for Enterprises and Communities," will feature presentations by acclaimed executive and municipal leaders from around the world, as well as a comprehensive introduction and exploration of four core topic areas as they relate to sustainability: Strategy, Operations, Finance and Metrics, and interactive working sessions. The conference is designed for individuals interested in and engaged with sustainable development who are seeking new tools, ideas and examples. Business and municipal executives are especially encouraged to attend.

More Information and Registration: <http://www.naturalstep.org>

Or contact the Conference Coordinator at 415-773-0552 or conference@naturalstep.org

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BFI Update

BFI Raises Bucky's Original Prototype Fly's Eye Dome

Last November, with the help of over 25 volunteers, we raised Buckminster Fuller's original prototype 26-foot Fly's Eye dome on the local property of BFI's Treasurer, Neal Katz. Our thanks go out to our fantastic volunteers and especially to Brad Twoomey and Mareva Russo, who enthusiastically hauled multiple loads of parts in moving trucks up from Santa Barbara and coordinated the dome assembly.

The plans for the erected dome are simple for now. We'll put on the skylights (the "fly's eyes") this Spring and make sure they don't leak. The Katz family will use the dome as a music room and the BFI will use it as a meeting space. Already it has been featured in a photo shoot by *Inc. Magazine* and in a film shoot for a local cable TV show.

Read more about the Fly's Eye dome in the upcoming issue of the Trimtab Newsletter. BFI members can look for their copy in the mail in April. See pictures of the dome raising at:

http://www.bfi.org/domes/flys_eye

Are you BFI member?

If you enjoyed this e-bulletin and want to support our work, you can say so with a tax-deductible donation which automatically makes you a BFI member. Member donations make it possible for us to bring you this information and more.

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Members receive:

- a yearly subscription to our newsletter, Trimtab;
- 10% discount on all product purchases (visit our online store at <http://www.bfi.org/search.html>);
- periodic special offers!

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