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John Hesse, director of finance and project and sustainability with Commonweal Conservancy, guts the inside of his 1978 Tradewind Airstream on Wednesday. Hesse is renovating the entire trailer with green materials and plans to take it on tour. - Jane Phillips/The New Mexican



# Little things to lift the planet: Santa Feans strive to live lightly on Earth

Staci Matlock | The New Mexican  
Posted: Wednesday, April 21, 2010

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Climate change, water pollution, lack of water, energy crisis, disappearing species.

It would be easy to get depressed on Earth Day, when the challenges to saving the world just seem to keep growing.

Still, right in Santa Fe's backyard people are making strides simple and ambitious to live lighter on the Earth. One is remaking something old into something "green." Some are using less fossil fuel by bicycling or hanging clothes out to dry.

Meet a few of our neighbors who inspire us all to keep trying. They are members of *The New Mexican's* online forum called The Green Line, and they've found some unexpected benefits to going green.

### The 'Greenstream'

John Hesse, senior project manager for Commonweal Conservancy near Santa Fe, figured the environmental movement was making a lot of progress with its believers. But, he wrote in an e-mail recently, "there are many people, products and places that are being excluded from the green movement and more importantly from the benefits of being green."

So Hesse is gutting and renovating a 1978 Vintage Airstream into a "Greenstream" that can act as a mobile classroom. "By using an Airstream as a mobile classroom, the green concept can more effectively reach and demonstrate to untapped audiences the effectiveness, costs, and ease of being green," Hesse wrote. "The compact form and mobile efficiency of an Airstream also stand out in stark contrast to the monster-living ethics that many people have been drawn to."

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Hesse is researching green products and design even as he finishes gutting the silver beast of old insulation and flooring. He'll tap into a team of architects, electrical engineers, carpenters and builders as needed to help with the project. He's documenting his progress in a "renovation blog" as he balances the constraints of the Airstream (heavy metal weight, critter control and cost) with the most effective and latest green components.

Hesse hopes to finish the project in 2011 and take the Greenstream on a two-month road tour to RV shows, conventions and concerts. Follow Hesse's project at <http://greeningmystream.wordpress.com/> and on his blog at [www.airforums.com/forums/blogs/38321-hessehesse.html](http://www.airforums.com/forums/blogs/38321-hessehesse.html).

**Ditching canale runoff**

Jan Denton and John Andrews of Santa Fe are planning a project lots of Santa Feans might consider: digging a ditch and lining it with straw to carry rooftop water from their home's largest canale into their landscaped xeric garden. The straw lining is a natural aggregator suggested by James Brooks, founder of the Albuquerque permaculture business Soilutions. This is one way to utilize free water (from the roof) to water the landscape. The ditch will be sloped to take advantage of gravity, draining the roof water into the plants.

Tucson, Ariz., author and water harvesting master Brad Lancaster will give some other ideas for saving water for landscapes instead of letting it run off into storm drains, during a free public talk, "Planting Water: What You Can Do Today," at 1 p.m. Sunday at the Hilton Hotel, 100 Sandoval St. The presentation is part of the four-day Water and Energy Summit and Expo in Santa Fe.

**Hanging out**

Line-drying clothes instead of using an electric or gas-powered dryer reduces energy bills and carbon emissions for a household. But in today's time-is-money, faster-is-better society, hanging clothes on a line seems, well, so old-fashioned and time consuming.

That didn't stop Linda Chmar, a member of the Tano Road Association, from hanging out her family's clothes on the line this last year whenever possible. "No easy feat with five family members, including two teenagers," Chmar wrote via e-mail. "This practice not only saves energy, but gets me outside most mornings, and forces me to examine our beautiful skies several times a day. Yes, it takes a bit more time to hang clothing outside instead of just throwing it in the dryer, but I have really gotten into the 'Zen' of line drying."

Another benefit, she notes, is sorting the clothes right off the line. She said the kids complain the clothes are a "bit more wrinkled, but all our laundry smells incredibly fresh."

She uses a fold-up line-drying apparatus available at hardware stores, and she uses wooden clothes pins. "They are sustainable, and hold up longer than the plastic ones," she wrote.

For allergy sufferers, fold-out racks for use indoors come in various shapes and sizes and are available at most department and hardware stores.

**Bus and bike**

Commuting between work and home via bus and bike is no easy feat for Bonney Hughes. She lives outside the Santa Fe city limits and works close to downtown. She said it takes about an hour to get to work on the bus and an hour to ride her bike home. About a year ago, she started commuting that way twice a week.

"I resisted this change for months because of the time it takes, but it definitely has its advantages," Hughes wrote recently. "I've gotten to know people and feel more connected to my neighborhood and the city as a whole from riding the bus, and I save time by combining a workout and a commute. I also get to experience one of the most beautiful commutes in the world."

Hughes crashed in January, her first major one in 40 years of bicycling, and ended up with a mild concussion and stitches. Still, she recently started back to the bike-and-bus commute.

Hughes, an environmental toxicologist, said the best environmental idea of the last year is the cap-and-dividend proposal in the CLEAR act, introduced in December by U.S. Sens. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., and Susan Collins, R-Maine. Hughes said the act sets an upper limit on carbon-dioxide emissions that can be released in the United States each year. Those emissions are among the greenhouse-gas emissions scientists have linked to climate change. "In the CLEAR Act, the U.S. Dept. of Energy would auction permits to emit CO2 to U.S. companies that import and produce fossil fuels," Hughes wrote. "75 percent of the money from the auctions would be divided evenly among U.S. consumers each month. The other 25 percent would go to a fund to pay for additional greenhouse gas emission reductions and for adapting to climate change."

Bonney Hughes blogs about climate change policy at [www.carbonlesscopy.blogspot.com](http://www.carbonlesscopy.blogspot.com).

Contact Staci Matlock at 986-3055 or [smatlock@sfnewmexican.com](mailto:smatlock@sfnewmexican.com).

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Have other cool ideas and projects for living greener? Share them at [www.santafegreenline.com](http://www.santafegreenline.com).

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