

Guerra, Katerina

Robert Morgan Education Center

Kilowatt Ours- Opinion Paper

Wait! Hold it right there! Before you flip that switch to turn on your light think about how it affects the world. With all the energy consumed these days, our planet is being deprived of its natural resources. In southeastern United States, more than 12,000 pounds of coal is burned per year for each home. Our dependence on coal must decrease as well as our emissions of green house gases.

My plan to reduce the green house gas emissions is to inform my friends. After watching “Kilowatt Ours”, I realized that it is very informative about energy usage and how to save energy and money. It has encouraged me to think before I use the computer or turn on a light. Since it has had such a great effect on me I do not see any reason not to recommend it to my friends. After all my friends and peers live here too, so why not spread the word? They can help save energy too! I was even thinking about buying the video so I can show it to all my friends. It really inspired me!

Right now your probably asking yourself why is this girl so inspired by a video? It’s about conserving energy, what on earth could be interesting about that? Well, it’s simple. We use energy (electricity) everyday but never realize its affects on the world. We are actually damaging our future and the future of those who will succeed us. How you may ask. Burning coal releases green house gases, which deplete our O-zone layer. As humans, living organisms on earth we need the O-zone layer to protect us from harmful Ultraviolet Radiation (UV rays) from the sun. As the O-zone layer becomes thinner it allows more of these rays to reach earth, some of which get trapped and

contribute to global warming. All these events can cause hazardous outcomes for our planet and its inhabitants. I believe we need to decrease the rate in which it is happening in hope to reduce these global problems caused by our everyday lives.

“Kilowatt Ours” describes the problems caused by producing electricity. Jeff Barrie, the filmmaker, shows the public ways to reduce our electricity usage, save money and use electricity more efficiently whether it is through buying Energy Star products or investing in compact fluorescent light bulbs for your home as described in the movie. Like many Jeff Barrie and many others across the United States I use compact fluorescent bulbs in my home. When we first installed them my dad noticed that his energy bill was much lower than before. Though I am not sure how much lower, I know it must have been enough to convince my dad to buy more of those light bulbs.

As well as this movie another influence to save energy was my eighth grade science teacher. His name is Mike Daugherty and he teaches at Herbert A. Ammons middle school. He stressed a lot on saving energy, recycling, and global issues. Since then he has inspired me to start recycling and to use more environment friendly products. To this day I still remember him lecture the class that with every second that passes an acre of rainforest is lost. It was his favorite lecture and the one that scared me the most. It makes me think, will there be any rain forests left on earth for my children? Why are they vanishing so rapidly? How many animals will become extinct?

The movie states that forests on top of mountains must be removed in order to mine coal for our energy production. As for the other questions, I am not sure of the answers and I do not wish to find out.

Did you know that over fifty percent of the United States electricity is produced by burning coal? If we continue down this path, who knows what might happen but I know it will not be good. I believe the United States should pursue alternate energy sources. In order to reduce pollution and environmental harms, I also believe that these energy sources should be efficient and eco-friendly. A variety of different sources would also decrease our dependence on coal burning, thus reducing green house emissions while still providing the public with energy privileges that we have grown so accustomed to. Some of these sources that I strongly suggest that the United States pursue are wind, solar, geothermal, hydroelectric/ hydro power and other renewable resources.

Wind power. According to a website from the U.S. Department of Energy, wind turbines are used to generate electricity. Many wind turbines are located on wind farms, which are used to produce energy for utilities. I have concluded that there are not enough wind farms in the United States and that we should develop more to manufacture a greater amount of wind power. However, we should not only depend on wind power. I once read that wind farms are causing a decrease in bat populations. The good news is that these bats are not endangered but we must keep in mind how these wind farms will affect them. Keeping this thought in mind has made me realize that we cannot become entirely dependent on any form of energy because it will have bad consequences although it may seem harmless.

Solar power is another renewable resource because we have an abundance of solar energy. Capturing this energy and using it to power our homes, cars, buildings, etc. would also be very efficient. It can be used in different amounts using different technologies and it is a clean source of energy. Some technologies for using solar energy

are stated on the website from the U.S. Department of Energy. These technologies are: photovoltaic cells, concentrating solar power technologies and low temperature solar collectors. Photovoltaic cells can produce large or small amounts of energy.

Concentrating solar power technologies engines and central power towers. Low temperature solar collectors are a bit different because they are used to heat water and space. So far I have found nothing but good evidence of solar power being a beneficial energy source but I have assumed that mass production of the technologies themselves could be harmful to the environment.

Although this next form of energy is not new, I had no idea what it was until I watched “Kilowatt Ours.” I have completed research on this form of energy and I find it useful though not as much as wind, solar and water. I found the definition of geothermal energy on a website called Energy Kid’s Page. Based on that site, geothermal comes from the Greek language where geo means earth and therme means heat. This means that geothermal energy is energy from the earth’s heat. This form of energy is also clean and considered renewable. It has three main uses: direct use, generating electricity, and heating.

Last but certainly not least, I think the United States should pursue hydroelectric/hydropower as an alternate source of energy. Hydroelectric power uses water to create electricity. In 2007, studies show that hydroelectric power produces six percent of the United States electrical power. Hydroelectric power, as well as the other source of power I described earlier, is clean. Unfortunately it does have a downfall. In order to use hydroelectric power, a fast stream of water needs to turn turbines and dams have been created to make this effect. These dams have damaged natural habitats though. I wish to

prevent these damages by proposing that the fast stream of water need to move the turbines be supplied by pre-existing waterfalls. Thus, fish and water organisms should not be affected and we still get the power we need. One hydroelectric facility that you may be familiar with is the Hoover Dam. It was completed in 1936 and is located on the Colorado River between Nevada and Arizona. The dam created a lake that is now considered a national recreational area.

In summation, I really enjoyed watching and learning about energy from “Kilowatt Ours” and I would without a doubt recommend this movie to a friend. It was informative, to the point and gives examples of how one can conserve energy. I would suggest that the United States pursue alternate sources of energy such as wind power, solar power, geothermal power, and hydroelectric/hydro power. I chose these sources of energy because they do not pollute our environment, they have small negative effects on the environment (if any) that can be controlled, and together I am sure they can produce enough energy to supply the United States. So before you turn on the light, television or computer, ask yourself if it is really necessary. If not, then don't turn it on. Trust me, it is worth it to save energy because it saves money as well as our planet Earth that we love so much. Believe it or not, one flip of a switch or push of a button has much more impact than you might think. Be smart. Help the environment. Conserve energy.

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