

# Interview with a Friend of the Earth

**FRIENDS OF THE EARTH'S** Bluewater Network division asked one of its dedicated supporters, Mike Kerwin, how he and his wife Amy incorporate environmental beliefs into their work and life. Here's what Mike had to say. Thanks, Mike, for being an inspiration to us!

**Q:** How do you incorporate your environmental concerns into your business practices?

**A:** There is an environmentally "better" choice in almost everything we do at work and at home. At Lorax Development in San Francisco, we build homes using green materials and environmentally conscious practices. Our homes are built on empty lots within the city because infill development keeps suburbia from expanding. We use solar for power and heat, collect rainwater, and use insulation made from recycled blue jeans. One of our recent houses provides water for every use except drinking water. If the code allowed, a simple technical "fix" would let us provide that too.

**Q:** Where do you envision green building going in the next 10 years?

**A:** Green building practices will simply become common building practices. But it will take new laws and consumer demand to make this happen. More demand equals more commercially available homes.

**Q:** Will this market include the average consumer anytime soon?

**A:** When the average consumer realizes that a green home is a better quality home: Healthier, stronger, more energy efficient. It's not just a political and social statement; green homes are better for the person living in it.



Mike, Amy, and Maggie at the Jean-Michel Cousteau Fiji Resort

**Q:** How do you and your wife, Amy, incorporate environmental concerns into everyday decisions at home?

**A:** Amy drives a Prius, and uses the public library, which is the oldest and best re-use program in the world. The biggest impact we can make is to support laws and organizations that work for the environment, like Bluewater Network. We believe that the most impact is made by legislation and education. And, as Amy says, it's important to vote with your pocket, too, to build markets for sustainable products.

**Q:** How do you make environmental choices when you're away from home?

**A:** When our family travels we choose to vacation at environmentally friendly resorts. "It's all about the animals" is our mantra. We saw how environmental education can make a difference on a recent trip to the Jean Michel-Cousteau resort in Fiji — which was an auction purchase from last year's Bluewater Network fundraiser. The resort actively engages the local people in education programs so that they are active participants in saving the reefs that surround the islands. The resort utilizes solar power and sponsors reef protec-

tion programs, and on-site education for local island school children.

**Q:** What role do you think energy plays in conservation?

**A:** Energy plays a huge role. From greenhouse gas emissions to air quality, not to mention the damage from extraction of natural gas, coal and oil. The energy we consume has direct environmental impacts. We need to use the cleanest energy available. In any scenario we can think of, the cheapest and best source is solar. Solar design has come a long way in recent years and the technology is rapidly improving.

**Q:** Why do you support Bluewater's work and Friends of the Earth's?

**A:** I am impressed by Bluewater's willingness to take on the big guys. Consumer demand and legislation will create change, and Bluewater's aggressive tactics incorporate both approaches.

**Q:** What environmental issue concerns you the most, especially since you have a young child?

**A:** Global warming and over crowding. We have spent our free time together instilling a love for the great outdoors. Whether it's Lake Tahoe and the Sierras, or the Pacific Ocean and North coast, our daughter Maggie has grown up with a love and respect for animals and their natural surroundings.

**Q:** Do you have any other thoughts about what it means to be an environmentalist?

**A:** Perhaps it means you take personal responsibility for your garbage, waste, and activities that impact the natural world. And most importantly, respect for the healthy soil, clean air and pure water that are an inalienable right of all inhabitants of this planet. ○