

# State of the Planet



FROM THE BLOG  
**Sustain What**

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## SUSTAINABILITY

# In Energy, Water and Climate Crises, Conservation is Still Too Often an Unmentionable 'C' Word

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BY ANDREW REVKIN | JUNE 8, 2022

*The following is an excerpt from a Sustain What blog post. [Check out the full post.](#)*



A bay in the Great Salt Lake is becoming a salt flat. Images: NASA

Too much of the clean-energy and climate conversation focuses on deploying the new and the cool. I say that even though I'm a big fan of both.

I'm on the Ford F-150 Lightning list. The first thing I'm doing when we settle into our new old home in Maine next week is setting up meetings with [energy contractors](#) to see if the latest [heat pumps](#) can cut our electric and propane bills (yes, and CO2 emissions).

But not enough attention is focused on something as old as Amory Lovins's "negawatts" metric — the energy you don't use, as with the water you don't waste, the trip you don't take.

In a way, resource conservation is like disaster-risk reduction; there's no headline in an avoided kilowatt-hour just as it's hard to write a news story about a flood that passed without killing anyone because people and property were prepared. (I ran a great Sustain What webcast on [making preparedness the story](#).)

Now is the time, if ever there was one, to amplify more systemic analyses that point to rapid, high-impact results from **changing behavior more than technology**.

Lowering the thermostat at home. Choosing to live in a walkable or bike-safe community. Telecommuting. Shifting from watering and cutting lawns to designing landscapes for the climates they exist in.

Ever since President Jimmy Carter's 1977 sweater-and-fireplace [speech on the energy crisis and inflation](#), talk of using less has seemed decidedly impolitic. It's almost as if conservation is still an unmentionable "c" word.

I hope you and I can help change that dynamic.

[Read on](#) for where we're at these days with conservation, even with Europe in an energy crisis, America's driving miles back up over the pre-pandemic peak and Utah's not-so-Great Salt Lake shriveling away.

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