ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF COVID-19

THOUGH SOME SEE THE PANDEMIC AS AN ENVIRONMENTAL BLESSING, EXPERTS ARGUE IT IS NOTHING BUT A TEMPORARY BREAK FOR OUR PLANET.
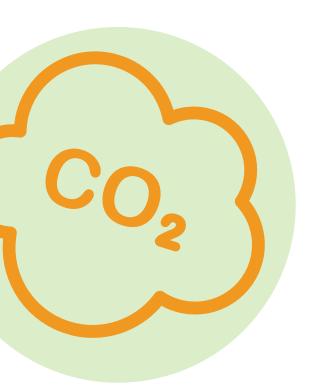
CARBON EMISSIONS

In early April, as global shutdowns began, nature.com reported that daily global carbon emissions were down by 17% compared to last year. However, ICOS reported that, as of June 11, new data showed that emissions were down only 5% from the previous year. This shows an increase in emissions as we slowly return to normal activity.

PPE POLLUTION

With the increased demand for single-use personal protective equipment (PPE) during the pandemic, new forms of pollution have flooded our oceans. The Ocean Conservancy estimates that 8 million tonnes of plastics enter our ocean every year, which is being escalated by the millions of gloves and masks being thrown away daily.

At the start of the pandemic, the World Health Organization projected that there would need to be a 40% monthly increase in the production of PPE supplies to meet demand. This estimated increase included 89m masks, 76m pairs of gloves and 1.6m pairs of goggles. With this new production model, the US could generate an entire year's worth of medical waste in just two months.

POLICY IMPACT

There have been numerous impacts on environmental policy and climate diplomacy, including the postponing of the crucial 2020 United Nations Climate Change Conference. The enforcement of some environmental protection laws have also been suspended in the US, allowing polluters to ignore some environmental laws by claiming said violations were caused by the pandemic.

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT POLITICIANS TAKE ACTION TO PASS LEGISLATION THAT WILL COMBAT THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON OUR ENVIRONMENT