



Humans have figured out how to turn many of Earth's materials into resources, like trees for paper or sunlight for energy. Pulling from the environment can have negative consequences, though.

In 1971, two ships transporting crude oil (meant to be turned into gasoline for cars) crashed in the San Francisco Bay. 800,000 gallons of toxic oil spilled into the water, putting thousands of animals' lives at risk. Frustrated and disturbed by this pollution at the hands of a major gas supplier, John Francis decided to stop using motor vehicles.

For 22 years, John walked everywhere, including across America. After realizing he was getting into arguments with

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## More about: John Francis

many people he encountered along the way, he decided to stop speaking, too. His vow of silence lasted 17 years, during which he only communicated using improvised sign language and notes. Amazingly, he earned three college degrees during this time! Through "Planetwalking" John was able to learn about the connection between himself, others, and the environment. He inspired people to think about how major companies who take from the planet might also be destroying it. John broke his silence on Earth Day 1990 and eventually accepted a job

creating oil-spill regulations for the US Coast Guard. Using his years of walking, studying, and listening to enact real policy change, John, like every environmentalist, became an important resource himself.

## **Experiment: Oil Spills are Tricky**

Oil spills are dangerous because it's hard to stop the oil from reaching animals, who might ingest it or get their fur or feathers ruined.

To try to clean up an oil spill yourself:

- 1 Fill a pan or tray halfway with water.
- Gently pour some vegetable oil in.
- 3 Try getting the oil out in different ways: spoon, sponge, paper towel, cotton balls.

Any other ideas? How would you try to clean up a big body of water? Document your findings below:





