

China Daoist Eight Year Plan for Ecological Protection (2010-2017)

“I have Three Treasures, which I hold fast and watch over closely: the first is kindness, the second is simple living and the third is not to presume oneself to be the chief of the whole world.” Daoist sage, Laozi, Chapter 67 of “Dao De Jing”

Introduction

There are more than 1,500 Daoist temples in China today, and approximately 30,000 Daoist monks and nuns. Tens of millions of people in China follow Daoist practices, and millions more engage in pilgrimages and visits to Daoist sites every year. This ancient indigenous faith still has a great deal of influence on this modern nation. As one of the five recognised religions in modern China, Daoism has recently reassessed its beliefs and values with regard to environmental issues.

The China Daoist Association, based in White Cloud Temple, has approved this Daoist Eight Year Plan which now represents the long term environmental strategy of all Daoist temples in mainland China. Daoists believe that humanity should obey nature’s rules, maintain the balance of our ecological systems and protect the species that live beside us. The main commitments are:

EDUCATION

- Daoist temples will hold regular Daoist ecological protection forums, hold teachings on the environment, set up information boards on ecological issues in prominent places, and also create (and explain) environmental construction standards. The target is that by 2015 there will be ecological education projects being run in half of all Daoist temples in mainland China.
- The temples will gradually set up volunteer teams to work with relevant communities to spread Daoist ecological thinking to the wider society.
- The Daoists will run regular youth camps for young people from urban China and overseas to spend time in nature, learn about protecting the environment and stay healthy through spending time in the natural world.
- The China Daoist Association will help Daoist temples form an alliance of Ecology Temples and Healthcare Temples to promote the connection between an ecologically friendly and a healthy lifestyle.

RESOURCES

Daoists will:

- Restore buildings and facilities on Daoist-used land according to traditional wisdom. From 2010 to 2012 they will draw up an ecological action plan (which will also cover the building of all new temples) and from 2013 to 2017 they will promote their experiences to temples across the country. These include: ritual, education, recycling, living, and media facilities.
- Protect the water resources around temples and deal effectively with sewage.
- Plant trees and other vegetation around the temples, with specific attention to protecting old trees. This includes creating natural meditation and walking places. They have already opened up such places in a few temples. From 2012 they will promote this practice in the grounds of suitable Daoist temples across the country.
- Call for a healthier and more environmentally friendly style of pilgrimage and travel. This mainly focuses on the “three stick incense burning” policy, in which temples promote the burning of just three sticks of incense instead of many sticks, as at present. This will reduce air pollution and provide a positive signal for China’s wealthy to adopt a simpler and more modest life. Daoists also recommend offerings of flowers and fruits as an alternative to burning incense.
- Use only environment friendly religious articles.
- Prohibit the use of ingredients from endangered animal and plants in all Daoist healthcare food and medicinal remedies.

- Make sure that temples with restaurants and lodging manage these places in ways that are kind to the environment, including saving water and energy and reducing the use of disposable tableware.
- set up Daoist medical clinics and welfare accommodation for the elderly – and run and manage these in environmentally friendly ways.

ECOLOGICAL WISDOM

Daoists will:

- Continue the tradition of simple and energy-saving lifestyles, and promote this to visitors and pilgrims.
- Integrate ecological concepts into rituals. They have already experimented with this in some of the Daoist temples - for instance, writing prayers about the environment.
- Actively cooperate with forest and tourist organisations to hold activities that will help protect the Daoist sacred mountains.
- Collect traditional stories on environment protection to provide useful lessons for today's environmental reality. From 2010 to 2013 they will collect the stories from local temples, to publish and distribute after 2014.
- Select their daily timetable and their food according to natural principles.

CREATING ECOLOGICAL PARTNERSHIPS AND CELEBRATIONS

Daoists will:

- Work within the standards, rules and regulations of government, as well as enhancing connections with international environment organisations.
- Emphasise ecological concepts inherent to traditional Daoist festivals, such as the birthday of the Supreme Lord Laozi. Some provinces have already begun to preach Daoist ecological concepts during Daoist festivals. From 2010 all temples are asked to emphasise ecological protection during both Daoist festivals and temple fairs.

- Produce Daoist ecology songs, dances and paintings, and show these art forms through TV and radio, the internet, concert celebrations and temple fairs.
- Incorporate International Environment Day activities within the Daoist religious calendar.