

Prof. Jared Diamond (2004) dramatized the situation by wondering what the Easter Islander who cut the last Chilean wine palm tree might have said.

*What about our jobs? Do you care more for trees than for people? or*

*Have some respect for private property rights. Get the big government of 'the chiefs' off our backs! or*

*You predict environmental disaster, but your environmental models are untested. We need more research.*

*Or perhaps, Never fear, technology will solve our problems somehow. We shall find substitutes for wood.*

There was revolt, the 'long-ear' chiefs were overthrown, and new military leaders (the short-ears) took over. With no canoes there were no dolphins to eat and the people turned to the next largest animal available; humans. The people were starving, sick, and at war. Eventually 70-90% died. Aha, a fundamental process of the universe at work.

Once all the trees were cut and people had no more canoes, they could not escape. There was nowhere to go when they got into trouble. Easter Island was so remote there was no one to come help them. The 'ecological footprint of Easter Island humanity' was too much for the resources that were available. The social and economic systems did not function in a way that encouraged and implemented sustainability – thus collapse occurred.

## **HUMANITY'S FOOTPRINT**

*Human beings and the natural world are on a collision course*  
World Scientists' Warning to Humanity (1992).

Can you imagine trying to determine the carrying capacity of our world? If the Easter Islanders couldn't do it for their world, how will we do it for ours? Well, a few years ago Prof. Mathis Wackernagel (2002) in collaboration with 10 other international economists devised an interesting measure of the carrying capacity of the earth. They wanted to account for humanity's current demands on the planet's resources and the wastes produced in terms of biologically productive areas necessary to maintain the flows needed for such an assessment. The usable biomass productivity of different kinds of areas were expressed as standardized,