Quick links:

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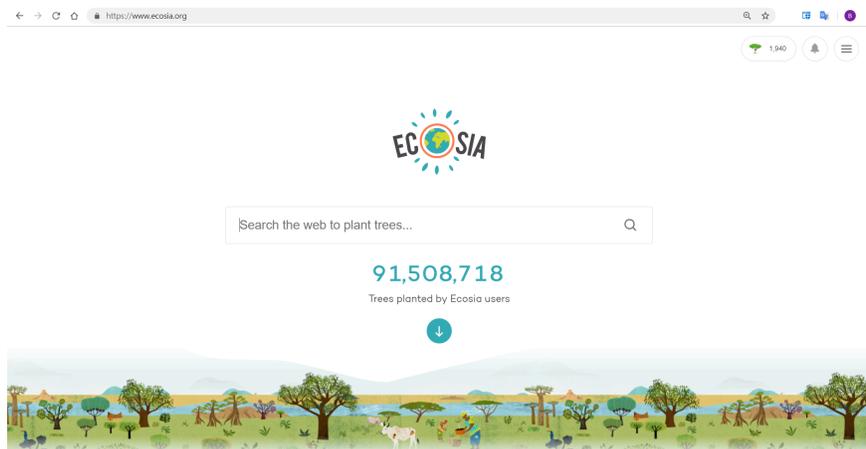benjmo@outlook.com
Instagram: @ihsgreen

General overview:

About Ecosia

Ecosia is a search engine like Google, except that it uses its revenue to plant trees. Ecosia is a social business and is a certified B Corporation - basically, this means that they have a positive impact in the world! So far, they have planted over 120 million trees in countries around the world, from Madagascar to Nicaragua to the US and everywhere in between. Ecosia's trees sequester carbon to fight climate change, promote healthy ecosystems and biodiversity, and financially support local communities. Ecosia is powered by Bing, so it has top-tier, professional search results, and the user experience is hardly different than with Google, the main difference simply being the Ecosia branding. Ecosia is also more respectful of user privacy than Google, and Ecosia is committed to financial transparency. More information: www.ecosia.org
Here's what Ecosia's home page looks like:

About our campaign

For the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, Interlake High School's Green Team and other high school environmental clubs in Bellevue [started a petition](#) for the Bellevue School District to set Ecosia as the default search engine across all district computers. Previously, the Green Team

had asked the district board about setting Ecosia as the default, and the district responded that they might consider it if the movement garnered enough popular support. This petition is a way of garnering that support and demonstrating to the district that Bellevue students and staff do indeed want to switch to Ecosia. Interlake Green Team has made an Instagram post (on our account @ihsgreen) to publicize this petition, and we are using other methods of communication such as email to get the word out, as well.

About the Tree fund (formerly the Ecosia fund)
The Tree fund not only supports tree-planting projects in sub-Saharan Africa, but also helps get the word out about Ecosia in our local Bellevue community and encourages the Bellevue School District to set Ecosia as the default search engine on all district computers!

Based on their experience with social media and other contemporary methods of spreading the word, Interlake Green Team students thought that it might be easier to spread the word about our Ecosia campaign by donating money to a tree-planting charity for each signature that the petition receives, and for each "share" that our related post on Instagram receives. As such, we set up the Tree fund (formerly the "Ecosia fund"), which will donate $0.50 for each petition signature and $0.50 for each "share" of our official Instagram post to Trees for the Future, a nonprofit that plants trees in coordination with local communities in sub-Saharan Africa. These donations are only possible up to the [amount of money that is in the Tree fund](#), and in order for Instagram "shares" to be counted, the account that is sharing our post must either be public or must DM us at @ihsgreen with a screenshot of their story.

NOTE: Just to be clear, **funds are not donated to Ecosia**, as Ecosia does not accept donations, but rather to one of Ecosia's partner organizations known as Trees for the Future.

Trees for the Future plants a tree with every $0.10 of donations they receive, so each petition signature and each "share" of our Instagram post will plant 5 trees, up to the amount in the fund. The Tree fund is continually growing and is powered by donations from local community members; we would welcome your donation, too! You can donate simply by accessing this [donation form](#), or by using Venmo - the correct username to donate to is Benjamin-Mousseau-2, and it should have the Ecosia logo as the profile picture. In the memo of your donation, please mention the Ecosia campaign so that we are sure of your intentions.

In the interest of transparency, a full list of donations to the Tree fund can be found on [this spreadsheet](#), and proof of donations from the Tree fund to Trees for the Future will be posted on [this document](#). More information about the Tree fund can be found in our FAQ.

FAQ

Why should the district set Ecosia as the default search engine?
Simply put, when given the option between supporting Google and supporting a global reforestation initiative, we think that it makes more sense to pick the global reforestation initiative. Planting trees is beneficial for local communities and local ecosystems, but it also benefits everyone on planet Earth by mitigating the negative effects of climate change.

Currently, if students want to use Ecosia, they would first have to hear about Ecosia so that they know that it exists (which is not necessarily an easy step), then they would either have to go to www.ecosia.org every time they want to search something, or they would have to navigate a complex set of browser settings, find Ecosia in the long list of possible search engines, and set it as the default. In our past experience trying to help students switch to Ecosia, we have personally found that students have difficulty navigating the browser settings, and most students shy away from the idea of setting Ecosia as their personal default search engine simply because the process sounds complicated. Having Ecosia as the district-wide default would solve this problem; we should be making it *easier* for students to have a positive influence on the environment, not harder.

Overall, the most important thing to keep in mind is that switching the district's default search engine to Ecosia *will* result in planting tens of thousands of additional trees where they are most needed, and for such a simple action, these far-reaching positive effects clearly are worth pursuing.

Would switching to Ecosia really have that big of an impact?
Yes! Here's a back-of-the-napkin calculation of how many trees would be planted annually if BSD switched to Ecosia.

Assumptions for conservative estimate:
- 16,000 students + staff, excluding elementary school students (source: link)
- 40% of people on the BSD network will use Ecosia as their default search engine *who are not already using Ecosia now* (this is a conservative estimate based on our survey results)
- An average of 4 searches per school day, 0 on non-school days
- 180 school days
- 45 searches per tree (source: link)
- 0.42 hectares restored per 1,000 trees planted (this is a weighted average based on Ecosia's existing projects - more details here)
- 1 kg of atmospheric CO_2 removed per Ecosia search (source: link)

Think about it this way: the district has about 20,000 students and 3,000 staff. Let's assume that elementary schoolers hardly ever search for things on the Internet, so excluding them, there are

about 16,000 people in the district. Let's assume that if we make Ecosia the default search engine, an additional 40% of all 16,000 students + staff will keep using Ecosia as their default search engine. If everyone searches on the Internet on average 4 times per school day, over 180 school days, that would come out to about 4.6 million Internet searches per year. Since it takes 45 searches to plant one tree on average, this back-of-the-napkin conservative estimate tells us that switching the district to Ecosia would plant around 100,000 trees every year. That's a lot of trees!

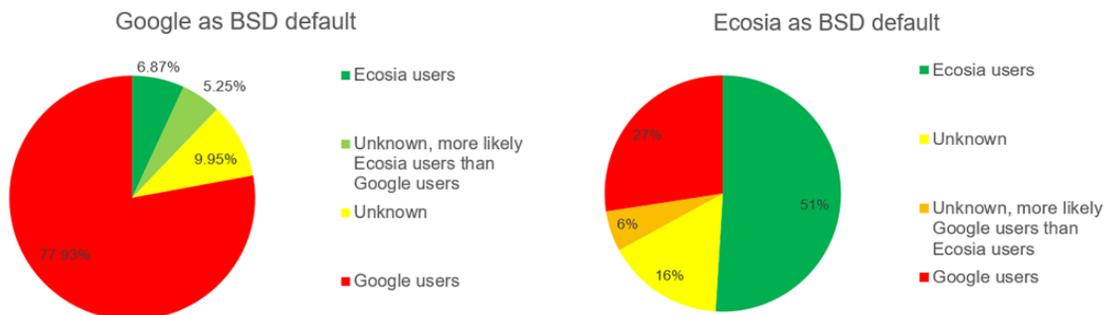Results of conservative estimate:
- **100,000 trees planted**
- **42 hectares of land restored**
- **4.6 million kg of atmospheric CO2 sequestered**

Every single year!

According to this conservative estimate, this means that in 4 years, BSD switching to Ecosia would plant enough trees to reforest an area the size of Downtown Bellevue (here are the calculations behind that).

And these trees aren't just good for nature – most of Ecosia's reforestation projects provide sustainable livelihoods for people who otherwise might struggle to make a living. For example, trees in gardens in sub-Saharan Africa improve soil health, thus allowing local farmers to grow more food and make more money from the land they own, which in turn lets them send their children to school and generally lead healthier, happier lives.

Here are two pie charts comparing how many people in BSD would use Ecosia if Google remains the BSD default and how many people would use Ecosia if Ecosia becomes the default:
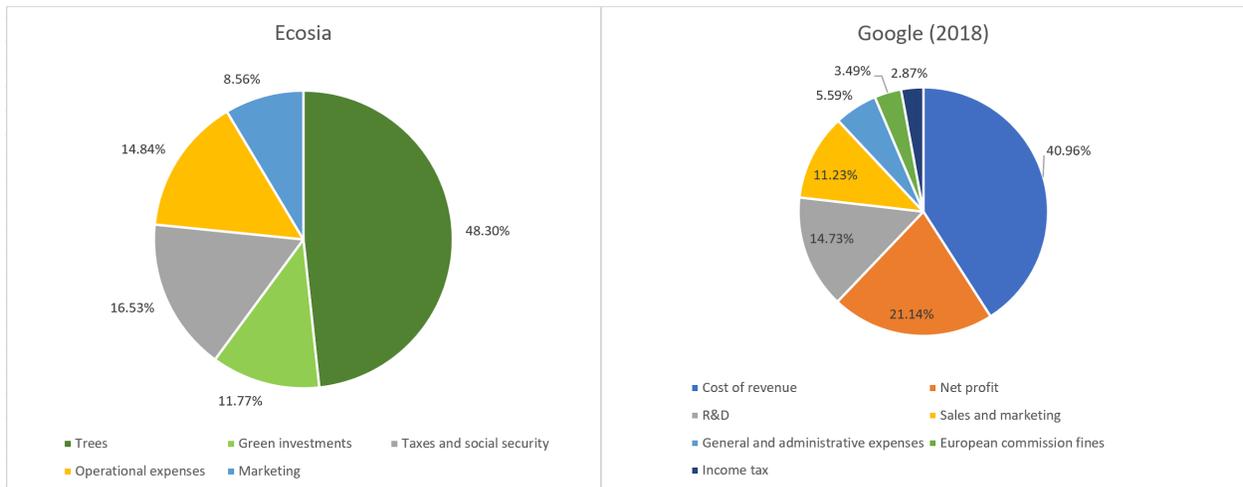

These results are from a sample of 3,698 students and staff at BSD. Full results from the survey can be found here.

Google has lots of great initiatives, too, like renewable energy development. Is Ecosia actually better for the planet than Google?

This is a great question! Google does in fact do lots of great conscientious stuff, like buying tons of renewable energy and supporting lots of other causes that have a positive effect on the world.

However, those positive causes simply represent a much, *much* smaller share of their expenditures than they do for Ecosia. Check out these pie charts of how each company spends its money:

Ecosia	Google (2018)
48.30% — Trees	40.96% — Cost of revenue
11.77% — Green investments	21.14% — Net profit
16.53% — Taxes and social security	14.73% — R&D
14.84% — Operational expenses	11.23% — Sales and marketing
8.56% — Marketing	5.59% — General and administrative expenses
	3.49% — European commission fines
	2.87% — Income tax

As you can see, supporting trees and other positive initiatives represents 60% of Ecosia's budget, because they are central to the purpose of Ecosia. Such positive efforts don't even figure on Google's official budget reports, simply because they are not an integral part of the company. If we do a bit more digging to see how much Google spends on renewable energy, matching donations, supporting affordable housing, salaries for employees who work on environmentally friendly products, and other impactful stuff like that, it would probably add up to only 6% of their budget, even being quite generous in our assumptions.
Sources and calculations for the pie charts: link.

Also, note that while Google buys enough renewable energy to cover all the energy used by Google searches, Ecosia buys **twice as much** solar power as it needs to cover all its searches! So it is actively crowding out dirtier energy from the electricity grid.

Will students still have the choice to *not* use Ecosia if they want?
Yes! We have always felt, and will always feel, that the most important thing is for students and staff to have the choice of what search engine to use. No matter what the district-wide default search engine is, everyone can still choose whether they use Google, Bing, Ecosia, DuckDuckGo, Ocean Hero, or any other search engine as their personal default.

Note that with every search, Ecosia offers an easy option to search with Google, so that if a student doesn't immediately find what they are looking for with Ecosia, they are one simple click away from a Google search.

If a student would prefer to have a different default search engine than Ecosia, they can always choose to go to their browser settings and set another search engine as their default. As we pointed out earlier in the FAQ, this option can take some effort to pursue, but it makes more

sense for students to need to make a concerted effort to move *away* from Ecosia rather than having to make that concerted effort to move *toward* Ecosia. We should be making it easier, not harder, for students to have a positive influence on the Earth.

Is Ecosia secure?
Absolutely! In fact, Ecosia guards users' data much more closely than Google does. Ecosia has been around since 2009 and has around 15 million active users, so they are among the most established search engines in the world. They are very protective of user privacy (more so than Google), and they have a clean 10-year security track record. Here are more details about Ecosia's security measures: https://info.ecosia.org/privacy. The top security measures they take are:

"WE DON'T STORE YOUR SEARCHES PERMANENTLY
We don't create personal profiles of you based on your search history. We actually anonymize all searches within one week.
WE DON'T SELL YOUR DATA TO ADVERTISERS
Many web services collect user data in order to sell it without asking your permission. We don't sell your data or your searches to advertising companies.
YOUR SEARCHES ARE ENCRYPTED
We protect your searches from potential eavesdroppers with a securely encrypted connection. This way we make sure that nobody between you and us can see your searches.
WE DON'T USE EXTERNAL TRACKING TOOLS
Most websites use external tracking tools, like Google Analytics, to optimize their services. We don't use such third party trackers, in order to prevent others from accessing your searches.
YOU CAN TURN OFF ALL OUR TRACKING
We only collect a small amount of data to be able to improve our services. If you want to opt out of tracking, you can activate "Do Not Track" in your browser's settings."

Is there precedent for anything like this?
Absolutely! There is an entire campaign called "Ecosia on Campus" that focuses on getting universities to make Ecosia the default search engine on campus. Here is a list of schools that have already made Ecosia their default search engine:
- The University of Sussex
- Ohio State University
- Swansea University
- University of Leeds
- College of Charleston
- Birmingham City University
- University of Sunderland, City Campus

How does the Tree fund (formerly the "Ecosia fund") work?
The Tree fund is a pool of money that is set aside by the leaders of the Ecosia campaign. Community members can choose to donate to the Tree fund to support tree-planting and to help

get the word out. For each "share" of the official Instagram post about the Ecosia campaign and for each signature on the petition, $0.50 will be donated from the Tree fund to Trees for the Future, which will fund the planting of 5 trees. In order for Instagram "shares" to be counted, the account that is sharing our post must either be public or must DM us at @ihsgreen with a screenshot of their story.

Here is proof of Trees for the Future certifying that they plant one tree per ten cents donated.

NOTE: Just to be clear, **funds are not donated to Ecosia**, as Ecosia does not accept donations, but rather to one of Ecosia's partner organizations known as Trees for the Future.

Please note that the per-signature and per-"share" donations are only possible up to the amount of money that exists in the Tree fund; for example, if the Tree fund has $500 in it and we receive 1,001 petition signatures, we will not be able to donate $0.50 for the last petition signature. Please also note that the Tree fund will only donate money to Trees for Future in accordance with how many signatures and shares our campaign receives. For example, if the Tree fund has $1,000 in it, and if our campaign only receives 100 signatures and 100 "shares," then we will only donate $100 to Trees for the Future, and the remaining $900 will be returned to donors.

After the campaign is over, any leftover money in the Tree fund will be returned to the donors in proportion to the amount of each respective donor's donation. This step is in place to ensure additionality. When people choose to sign the petition or share our post, their action is actually *causing* money to be donated to Trees for the Future; the alternative is that all the money in the Tree fund gets donated regardless of their signature or "share" action, which defeats the purpose of incentivizing spreading the word. If, after the leftover money is returned to donors, donors personally choose to donate the returned money to Trees for the Future, that is their prerogative. :)

If potential donors would prefer to financially support the campaign without going through the Tree fund, but rather by donating directly to Trees for the Future, we can make that work, too! We would just need to know up to how much money the donor is willing to pledge, and we can inform the donor once enough signatures and shares of our petition come through, then the donor could donate the correct amount directly to Trees for the Future, and we would need a digital copy of the donation receipt or other proof of the donation. If this interests you, just reach out to us at benjmo@outlook.com.

Where will money from the Tree fund be donated?
Money will be donated to Trees for the Future, a nonprofit organization that plants trees where they are most needed. Trees for the Future employs sustainable agroforestry practices to plant Forest Gardens that economically support local communities *and* ecologically support local ecosystems. Trees for the Future is partnered with Ecosia, meaning that Ecosia helps support their tree-planting projects, and Ecosia has already planted 1.1 million trees through their program. More information: www.trees.org

Why should I donate to the Tree fund instead of just donating directly to Trees for the Future?
By donating to the Tree fund, you not only support tree-planting projects in sub-Saharan Africa, but also help get the word out about Ecosia in our local Bellevue community and encourage the Bellevue School District to set Ecosia as the default search engine on all district computers. If you donate directly to Trees for the Future, that is also a wonderful thing to do! But it lacks the benefit of incentivizing BSD students to share our campaign and sign the petition along the way, which will help create longer-lasting change if BSD sets Ecosia as their default search engine.

How do I know this isn't a scam?
If you are wondering this, thank you for being careful about where you put your money! But you can rest assured that this is not a scam. All receipts of donations to Trees for the Future will be posted on this document, and all donations that the Tree fund receives will be logged on this spreadsheet. If you ever have any concerns about the integrity of this campaign, please feel free to reach out to us at interlakegteam@gmail.com or (425) 283-7322, and we will address your concerns as truthfully and quickly as we can.

We understand that it's a lot easier to put trust in a person with a face rather than just some links and spreadsheets, so here's a video I took of myself (Benjamin Mousseau, the campaign lead and president of Interlake's Green Team) explaining my passion for this campaign. :) Enjoy!
https://youtu.be/Q5KGL4eLAXQ

I love this campaign! How can I help?
Thanks so much! You can sign the petition, send the petition to your friends/share it on social media, donate to the Tree fund, set Ecosia as your own personal default search engine, and download the Ecosia app on your phone. You're the best!!!