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Johnson, Baylor L., "Ethical Obligations in a Tragedy of the Commons"

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Johnson, Baylor L. “Ethical Obligations in a Tragedy of the Commons.” *Environmental Values* 12, no. 3 (2003): 271–87. doi:10.3197/096327103129341324 .

When people use a resource without a coordinated plan the result is often a tragedy of the commons in which the resource is depleted. Many environmental resources display the characteristics of a developing tragedy of the commons. Many believe that each person is ethically obligated to reduce use of the commons to the sustainable level. I argue that this is mistaken. In a tragedy of the commons there is no reasonable expectation that individual, voluntary action will succeed. Our obligation is not fruitlessly to reduce individual use, but to support a collective agreement to reduce everyone’s use to the sustainable level.

— Text from The White Horse Press website

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