



EARTH DAY 2000

INFORMATION SHEET

Background

The beginnings of Earth Day started with Senator Gaylord Nelson and his concerns for the environment. Unfortunately, the environment was not an issue within the politics of this country in the 60's. Senator Nelson persuaded President Kennedy to try to give national visibility to this issue by going on a five-day nationwide Conservation Tour in September 1963. By the late 60's, there was a lot of turmoil on college campuses over the Vietnam War and protests and anti-war teach-ins were very common. In the summer of 1969, after reading about the teach-ins on college campuses, Senator Nelson thought of the organizing a nationwide teach-in on the environment. He spent the rest of the summer planning, raising funds and organizing the event. During a speech in September 1969 at Seattle, he announced that there would be a national environmental teach-in in the Spring of 1970. By December 1969, the movement has expanded so much that an office was opened in Washington DC to serve as a National Clearinghouse for Earth Day inquiries and activities.

That national event was called Earth Day and was held on April 22, 1970. It achieved its objective to get a nationwide demonstration of concern for the environment that was so large that it would get the attention of the political establishment and force this issue permanently onto the national political agenda. It was a gamble but it worked and an estimated 20 million people participated in demonstrations all across the country. Events at 2,000 colleges were organized through the movement. In addition, local efforts also organized events at 10,000 grade schools and high schools and at 1,000 communities. It worked because of the spontaneous, enthusiastic response at the grassroots level. That first Earth Day helped create the modern environmental movement, as well as the first environmental legislation--the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts.

At the 20th anniversary of Earth Day (April 22, 1990), the scope of Earth Day expanded to international. Earth Day was celebrated by more than 200 million people in 141 countries. A new organization, the Earth Day Network was founded in 1990 to continue the cause. The Earth Day Network (EDN) is a volunteer-based network of individuals, groups, businesses and schools sharing ideas and materials for making a difference. The mission of EDN is to increase awareness, responsibility and action toward a clean, healthy environment for all living things using Earth Day as a catalyst. The Network's focus is people and its commitment is environmental.

Earth Day is an annual opportunity for people around the world to recommit themselves to a healthy environment and sustainable communities. Earth Day is most often observed by the media, hundreds of local groups and noted on calendars on April 22. Many people also observe Earth Week and Earth Month. Since most events and festivals need to take place on a weekend, Earth Day is observed on the weekends before and after April 22. Others also observe it on March 21, the Vernal Equinox or on World Environment Day, June 6. For those of us who are really committed to the environmental well being of our planet, Earth Day Is Every Day.

Earth Day Network address

EDN Headquarters/Earth Day 2000: 91 Marion St., Seattle, WA 98104, Phone: (206) 264-0114;
EDN Grassroots Networking: P.O. Box 9827, San Diego, CA 92169, Phone: (619) 272-0347;
Email: earthday@earthdayspirit.org; Website: <http://www.earthday.net>; SE EDN Regional office:
435 East Zaragoza Street, Pensacola, FL 32501, 850-434-9988, Email: earthdayse@aol.com

Other Earth Day websites

EarthDay Info [http://www.earthday.org/](http://www.earthday.org)
EPA Earth Day <http://www.epa.gov/epapages/earthday/other.htm>
Earth Day '98 Online <http://www.envirolink.org/earthday/>