

Founder explains earth day

by Gaylord Nelson, Counselor
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Does this story have a familiar ring to it?

A giant oil spill hits the coast of a large western state. Millions of gallons of crude oil wash up on shore for weeks. The nation is riveted by television pictures of oil-soaked birds and dead fish floating in the ocean and washed up on shore. Oil company executives deliver excuses and claim it's a one-in-a-million disaster. Cleanup crews are dispatched, and millions of dollars are spent by state, federal and local governments in a cleanup and recovery program.

It's not what you think. The disaster happened 20 years ago near Santa Barbara, California. It remains one of the worst oil spills in American history. It also proved to be a catalyst in helping to awaken America's environmental consciousness. Some 16 months later, a much more significant phenomenon occurred on April 22, 1970-the first Earth Day.

It really all started in the summer of 1969 while I was on a tour of Western states to talk about conservation issues. As I was flying to Berkeley for a speech to students-after inspecting the Santa Barbara oil spill-I read an article in *Ramparts* magazine about how teach-ins were being used by anti-war organizers to educate the public. Suddenly it occurred to me-why not set aside a day for a nationwide teach-in on the environment? In September I announced plans for Earth Day and the response was nothing short of remarkable.

The main purpose of Earth Day was to organize a nationwide, grassroots demonstration that would get the attention of the politicians and force environmental issues into the mainstream of American political debate. It worked. Earth Day 1970 was a huge success, and an instant American legend, due in large part to the tremendous energy, commitment and grassroots activities of college students all across the country.

On this date in the spring of 1971 the modern American environmental movement took off. Twenty million people, 200 college and universities, 10,000 grammar and high schools and 2000 communities mobilized for the first

nationwide demonstrations on environmental problems. Congress adjourned for the day so members could attend Earth Day events in their districts.

Sometimes it is hard to remember that twenty years ago environmental issues were not part of the political mainstream. In the 1968 Presidential campaign, for every presidential campaign.

Perhaps the most important advance since Earth Day is one of example, not a single candidate was devoted to environmental concerns. Changes in the past 20 years assure that from now on the environment will be an issue in

important to the condition of man on the planet than the threat of nuclear war, missile gaps, Star Wars, crime in the streets, or communism in Nicaragua.

How much longer are the US and the Soviet Union going to spend \$600 billion a year for weapons that only increase our mutual vulnerability and dissipate our resources. It is time for the two superpowers to agree to cut spending on weapons by 50 percent in the next decade and another 50 percent in the following decade. Half of the savings should be dedicated to programs to reverse and restore

and the world. The first step is to join in the celebration and activities of the 20th anniversary of Earth Day. Beyond that, think of the future, have vision and make a commitment to a conservation ethic in your life. Cherish the air, the water and the land that sustains you and all mankind. Seize the opportunity to make a difference. Persist in your efforts, make the politicians listen-and act. You can prevail and win the fight to save the planet.



attitude and understanding-the recognition, finally, that human activities have created a global environmental crisis that urgently demands our attention. This is a giant leap forward. Plans are now being finalized for a worldwide Earth Day celebration on April 22, 1990. Let there be no doubt about the significance of this event: it will be the largest grassroots demonstration in history. The single most important objective of this 20th anniversary celebration is an international public demonstration so overwhelming that it will literally shake the political leadership of the world out if its lethargy and galvanize it into a monumental cooperative effort to stop the destruction and begin the restoration. It is time for political leaders of every nation to recognize that in the long haul the state of our environment is far more

global environmental damage. It is a plan with no losers-and the whole world is a winner.

There has been some significant progress on environmental problems since that first Earth Day. Yet, merely maintaining the current programs and policies will fall far short of what is needed to prevent continued steady environmental decline. The responsibility lies with the world's younger generation. My generation does not have the time left to do it, and, unfortunately came to an appreciation of the monumental significance of the issue too late.

If society is going to develop a conservation ethic to guide its conduct, your generation must become the conservation generation. There is no other choice for the world. Your generation has the power to make a critical difference in the political course of the nation

Editor's Note: The following letter is special to the Earth Day Issue.

Dear non-ECO members,
Please join.
The Earth needs you.
We need you.

Thanks,
Carla Jimenez

Dear Editors,
I wrote my first letter simply to state simply what I thought needed to be said. I then decided, though, that more did need to be said, much to everyone's chagrin, I'm sure.

Salem ECO just started out this year and has a small following, less than twenty regular people, which is expected for a new group. But the cause which ECO stands for is very important. I know everyone is busy and involved in many other important activities, but the demise of the environment is something we can't ignore. It will eventually negatively affect every person on this planet.

I'm not asking that the whole campus join ECO, but we do need to start changing the way we live and how it affects the environment. And it would be nice if we had more people involved in the club. With such small numbers, we don't even come close to doing everything we want to get accomplished.

And you must understand that it is the environment we are trying to save. If we fail in our attempts, we are going to be the ones to suffer.

Sincerely,

Carla Jimenez