



Earth Day 2012

Organizer Guide

www.earthday.org

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Earth Day: The History of a Movement

Each year, the Earth Day celebrations on April 22nd mark the anniversary of the birth of the modern environmental movement in 1970.

At the height of hippie and flower-child culture in the United States, the 1970s brought the death of Jimi Hendrix, the last Beatles album, and Simon & Garfunkel's "Bridge over Troubled Water". Protest was the order of the day, but saving the planet was not the cause. War raged in Vietnam, and students nationwide were increasingly opposed to it; four of them even gave their lives at a protest at Kent State University.

At the time, Americans were slurping leaded gas through massive V8 sedans, industry belched out smoke and sludge with little fear of legal consequences or bad press, air pollution was commonly accepted as the smell of prosperity. And "environment" was a word that appeared more often in spelling bees than on the evening news.

Earth Day 1970 turned all of that around.

The idea came to the Earth Day founder Gaylord Nelson, a U.S. Senator from Wisconsin at the time, after witnessing the ravages of the 1969 massive oil spill in Santa Barbara, California. Inspired by the student anti-war movement, he realized that by infusing that energy with an emerging public consciousness about air and water pollution, it would force environmental protection onto the national political agenda. Senator Nelson announced the idea for a "national teach-in on the environment" to the national media; persuaded Pete McCloskey, a conservation-minded Republican Congressman, to serve as his co-chair; and recruited Denis Hayes as national coordinator. Hayes built a national staff of 85 to promote events across the land.

As a result, on April 22nd, 20 million Americans took to the streets, parks, and auditoriums to demonstrate for a healthy, sustainable environment in massive coast-to-coast rallies. Thousands of colleges and universities organized protests against the deterioration of the environment. Groups that had been fighting against oil spills, polluting factories and power plants, raw sewage, toxic dumps, pesticides, freeways, the loss of wilderness, and the extinction of wildlife suddenly realized they shared common values.

Earth Day 1970 achieved a rare political alignment, enlisting support from Republicans and Democrats, rich and poor, city slickers and farmers, tycoons and labor leaders. The first Earth Day led to the creation of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the passage of the [Clean Air](#), [Clean Water](#), and [Endangered Species](#) Acts. "It was a gamble," Gaylord recalled, "but it worked."

As the year 1990 approached, a group of environmental leaders asked Denis Hayes to organize another big campaign. This time, Earth Day went global, mobilizing 200 million people in 141 countries and lifting environmental issues onto the world stage. Earth Day 1990 gave a huge boost to recycling efforts worldwide and helped pave the way for the 1992 United Nations Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. It also prompted President Bill Clinton to award Senator Nelson the Presidential Medal of Freedom (1995) -- the highest honor given to civilians in the United States -- for his role as Earth Day founder.

As the millennium approached, Hayes agreed to spearhead another campaign, this time focused on global warming and a push for clean energy. With 5,000 environmental groups in a record 184 countries reaching out to hundreds of millions of people, Earth Day 2000 combined the big-picture feistiness of the first Earth Day with the international grassroots activism of Earth Day 1990. It used the Internet to organize activists, but also featured a talking drum chain that traveled from village to village in Gabon, Africa, and hundreds of thousands of people gathered on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Earth Day 2000 sent world leaders the loud and clear message that citizens around the world wanted quick and decisive action on clean energy.

Much like 1970, Earth Day 2011 came at a time of great challenge for the environmental community. Climate change deniers, well-funded oil lobbyists, reticent politicians, a disinterested public, and a divided environmental community all contributed to a strong narrative that overshadowed the cause of progress and change. Due to the sensitive timing of Earth Day and Good Friday occurring on the same day, many individuals were not able to organize Earth Day events within their community. However, Earth Day events were still organized in 177 countries worldwide, and close to a thousand locally elected officials were mobilized in U.S. For this upcoming year, Earth Day Network hopes to partner with a variety of individuals, groups, and organizations as a means to broaden the scope of the environmental movement and make Earth Day 2012 a success for all communities worldwide.

Earth Day 2012 - Mobilize the Earth

This year, the theme for Earth Day is Mobilize the Earth. The 42nd Anniversary of Earth Day will bring together an unprecedented amount of individuals and organizations alike to celebrate the environment. The ‘Mobilize the Earth’ campaign aims to simply say that the Earth won’t wait. In the midst of the global recession, it seems that environmental issues have been put on the back burner; however, these problems will not subside simply because we ignore them. This campaign calls for people across the planet to unite and speak with one voice. The time has come for our leaders to put us on the path to sustainability and address our economic future by backing the green economic seriously.

Earth Day Network will also continue to achieve the goal of registering A Billion Acts of Green® before the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro (Rio+20) in June 2012. A Billion Acts of Green® aims to mobilize one billion acts of environmental service around the world, calling all individuals to commit an act that helps reduce carbon emissions and promotes sustainability. The act can be a simple gesture, such as washing laundry in cold water, or immense, like picking up a million pounds of trash. Whatever the act may be, Earth Day is a great time to generate as many as possible in your community. Collectively, these acts will not only have an impact on global carbon emissions, but will also demonstrate the power of small every-day individual acts of green.

When organizing and planning your Earth Day event, find a way to incorporate A Billion Acts of Green®. This may entail giving people a green act to perform at your event, or getting folks to pledge to an environmental act in the near future. Either way, make sure the acts are registered with the campaign so the millions of individual green efforts can be properly measured. Let participants know that they are taking part in the world’s largest-ever environmental service movement and that every small act counts.

To register the acts, visit campaign headquarters at act.earthday.org, or find A Billion Acts of Green® on Facebook or Twitter. The online registration tools are easy to use and only take a minute to complete.

For more information about the ‘Mobilize the Earth’ campaign and all additional programs that Earth Day Networks is working on, please visit <http://www.earthday.org/earth-day-2012>.

With thousands of Earth Day events and a billion participants, this Earth Day we can show the world that every individual can make a difference!

Ten Ways to Be Heard for Earth Day

On April 22nd 1970, the first Earth Day brought the environment into the national conversation by the presence of thousands of rallies and events across the nation. It paved the way for the Clean Air Act and the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

For a successful Earth Day 2012, Earth Day Network wants to get America mobilized in caring and protecting our environment. Your event is crucial in helping give new dynamics to the environmental movement, and also in achieving a Billion Acts of Green®.

Develop your own Earth Day event or use one of the ideas listed below! Most importantly, make sure you do something that is engaging and that you enjoy; we want people to get excited about protecting the environment!

1. Organize an Earth Day hike, walk, run, swim or bike outing.
2. Put together a light bulb drive in your community. Collect old incandescent light bulbs and give away (or sell at discounted price) energy-efficient, compact fluorescent light bulbs.
3. Call your local Parks Department and offer to plan a park clean-up, invasive plant removal or tree planting.
4. Bring local green businesses and environmental organizations together to create an eco-fair to inform the public about ways they can build a greener future. Schedule it to coincide with a farmers' market and further engage a captive audience (See: [Fayetteville's 2011 Information Session about Earth Day](#))
5. Invite a professor or a local expert to educate your group or community about the threat of climate change and the ways to combat it.
6. Take an [Earth Day Network petition template](#) and make it your own. Use it to demand comprehensive climate and clean energy legislation. Collect signatures in a central location and deliver the petition to your elected officials after Earth Day.
7. Call a school or community center and offer to build and plant a vegetable garden for them and help maintain it during the year. Coordinate with local companies to request supply and service donations.
8. Organize a meeting with local government officials to learn about how they take environmental issues into consideration when managing your region. Contact Earth Day Network and make your event part of [Campaign for Communities](#), an initiative that engages leaders around the world in discussions within their local communities on the issues of climate, energy and sustainability.
9. Organize a screening of an environmentally-themed documentary such as King Corn, Blue Vinyl, Who Killed the Elected Car, Earth Days, Blue Planet or the 11th Hour.
10. Organize an e-waste recycling drive. Collect old computers, televisions and other electronic equipment from your community and find somewhere to recycle them.

Ten Big-Picture Ideas for Organizing

1. **Develop a vision:** Come up with a general idea for your Earth Day event.
2. **Build a Team:** We can't solve climate change alone, and organizing is more fun with others! Build a team you can work with to plan events in your community. Identify and empower captains for various projects, such as recruitment, service, publicity, etc.
3. **Define Project:** With your team, create the plan for the event. Be creative – A shift in mindset can take place in many forums.
4. **Set Goals:** Once you have a plan, have your team set achievable goals. Remember setting metrics for success is important for team morale. Success may be getting 10 volunteers for a park clean-up or 10,000 participants at a climate rally. Set goals and then work to meet and exceed them.
5. **Work Out Logistics:** Secure a location for the event, determine the time and date, and plan out the program schedule. Register the event on the Earth Day Network's events toolbar so locals can find your event.
6. **Broaden Your Team:** Climate change affects people from all communities and backgrounds. Reach out to neighbors, organizations and groups who may or may not traditionally get involved with environmental causes and bring them on as partners.
7. **Fundraise:** Event planning takes money. Designate a fundraising captain and have everyone pitch in to raise the necessary funds to make your event a success.
8. **Media Campaign:** Start marketing and advertising for your event! Register the event on Earth Day Networks events planner, work with local media, and try to reach out to local government officials. See the 10 Steps to Generating Media Coverage guide for a comprehensive media strategy.
9. **Run a Successful Event:** Make sure the event stays on schedule and be prepared for eventual problems.
10. **Follow-up:** Get feedback from your team and event participants on your event. Find out what worked well and how you can improve next time. Estimate how many green acts your event generated and post your results online at the Billion Acts of Green headquarters at act.earthday.org

Ten Steps to Generating Media Coverage

1. **Develop Key Messages:** Draft three to five key messages that tell a compelling story about your event, its purpose and your goals. For example, a beach clean-up has a different message than a rally demanding climate change legislation.
2. **Identify a Spokesperson:** Select a member from your organization and/or community. The spokesperson will deliver key messages via media interviews, a press release quote, and in some cases, a public address at the event.
3. **Find a News Hook:** Many organizations perform service, plan rallies and otherwise mobilize around Earth Day. Determine what makes your event interesting and newsworthy and use that angle as a selling point when communicating with the press.
4. **Build a Media List:** Compile a list of local media contacts from newspapers, blogs, radio stations, TV stations, etc.. The list should include a reporter's name, title, area of focus, phone number and, e-mail. Remember to include the phone number and e-mail for the assignment desk at each outlet, including wire services such as Associated Press and Reuters.
5. **Prepare Materials:** Draft a media advisory – a one-page document that outlines the logistics of your event (who, what, when, where and why) and your contact information. Next, prepare a press release – a one to two-page document providing additional context about the event from your organization's perspective. The release sets up a news angle for the media and should include quotes from the spokesperson.
6. **Send Materials to Media:** Distribute the media advisory one week before your event and send the press release the day before or the morning of the event. Send all materials before 9:00 am and be prepared to follow up with a phone call.
7. **Pitch your Event:** Follow-up e-mail distribution of materials with a phone call to pitch your story. This allows you to offer an interview with a spokesperson, pitch a pre-event story and confirm attendance.
8. **Run a Great Event:** Ensure events take place according to schedule, particularly activities highlighted for the media.
9. **Greet the Media:** Create a media area (room, tent or several tables). This area should include a quiet space for media interviews, media materials and a sign-in sheet, which will allow you to follow up with attendees later. Ensure spokespeople are easily accessible for interviews.
10. **Follow-up:** Call reporters who attended your event to follow-up on needs and confirm coverage. Track and record media placements to analyze the tone of coverage

Encourage the Government to Go Green

Remember, Earth Day is the perfect opportunity for you to share your concern about the environment with your government. Use your event or campaign as a platform to reach out to government officials and begin a conversation about greening your community. Let them know you want climate and clean energy legislation.

1. Encourage your local elected official, legislator, government leader or minister to issue a public statement about your Earth Day event or campaign. Send officials your proposed proclamation and invite them to discuss it at their next meeting or presentation.
2. Set up a meeting with your local elected official, legislator, government leader or minister to discuss your campaign for Earth Day.
 - Have a small but diverse group attend these meetings to emphasize your broad base of support
 - In advance of the meeting, arrange who will be leading and who will say what. If the person with whom you meet has questions for you that you do not know how to answer, it is okay to say, "I am not sure, but I will research that and get back to you."
 - Use a short fact sheet and other supporting materials to ensure that you have a clear message.
 - Offer concrete suggestions for how civic leaders can help achieve a rapid clean energy. For example, call for city and state-wide energy audits to identify potential reductions in power that will benefit taxpayers, state and municipal budgets, and the environment.
3. If you can't set up a personal meeting, there are other ways to reach your lawmakers:
 - Attend a city council or other public meetings to get your issue addressed and also to raise enthusiasm for your event. Bring Earth Day buttons for supporters and fact sheets, sign-up sheets or other useful information for interested parties.
 - Take the opportunity to speak about your event or campaign at public meetings where legislators may be present. Ask questions and organize your network to do the same.
 - Organize a lobbying campaign through written communication. At every event, have a letter-writing table with sample letters. Supply stamps, postcards or pre-stamped envelopes, and collect the letters or postcards to be mailed.
 - If the official appears on a local television or radio program, call in and ask questions.