

## EARTH DAY

# Earth Day has successful past

It's been 25 years since the first Earth Day, which was on April 22, 1970. Looking back, many accomplishments have been made for the good of the environment, most notably with the successes of the first Earth Day and its 20-year anniversary.

Former U.S. Senator Gaylord Nelson is the Wisconsin Democrat who established the first Earth Day. In an interview with *E* magazine, Nelson points out that he was at one time the only senator with an environmental staff person. Twenty-five years later, all 535 members of Congress have a person working on environmental issues.

Nelson is still involved with Earth Day events, including Earth Day 1995.

"My basic message is that we should try to build a sustainable country and achieve population control," Nelson said.

Nelson recruited Denis Hayes, then a 25-year old law student at Harvard University, to help organize the first Earth Day. Events included a large number of educational gatherings, such as teach-ins, at universities and schools across the country.

Other events on that day included citizens cutting up their oil company credit cards for television cameras and a student gathering at Boston's Logan Airport protesting the SST, America's super-sonic transport. The SST was never built.

About 20 million Americans participated in events for Earth Day 1970, and even Congress recessed early to allow members to take part in activities.

John Baldwin, associate professor in the Planning, Public Policy and Management Department and director of the University's Institute for a Sustainable Environment said he was greatly affected by the first Earth Day.

"With attempts to roll backwards what progress has been made on some environmental fronts and with the deterioration of resources," he said, "it's time to redouble our resolve to tackle these problems efficiently, and appreciate the beauty and bounty of our environment."

Baldwin was attending Jamestown Community College in Jamestown, New York at the time. About 200 students were involved in a march celebrating Earth Day. A teach-in was also sponsored, at which science students discussed environmental problems and solutions.

Baldwin remembers these events as catalysts for him to pursue a career in environmental biology. A year later, he did some of the original water pollution work on Lake Erie. In 1972, he canoed the Cuyahoga River in Cleveland after it caught on fire, taking water samples.

Important victories for the environment resulted from the first Earth Day in 1970. The Environ-

mental Protection Agency was created, and the ground-breaking Clean Air Act of 1970 was passed by Congress. That act phased out lead in gasoline and reduced auto emissions.

Environmental activists also caused the military to stop spraying Agent Orange and other toxic chemicals in Vietnam.

Between the first Earth Day and the 20-year anniversary, interest in the event dwindled.

In 1990, a worldwide celebration was planned to relive the success of the original Earth Day.

Denis Hayes, who helped organize the first Earth Day, also led the planning of the 20-year anniversary. This time, the goal was to involve societies worldwide and help Earth Day become a global event.

Earth Day 1990 may have been the largest global event ever in which the greatest number of people united for a common cause. The *New York Times* reported on April 23, 1993 that "by day's end organizers of the sequel to Earth Day 1970 said 200 million people in 140 nations had taken part in the largest grassroots demonstration in history."

Hayes described the state of the environment on Earth Day 1990, in *Audubon* magazine.

"The greenhouse effect is now beyond dispute," he said. "Species are disappearing faster

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