

Meaning of Earth Day has evolved

By Jennifer Carter
Student Activities Editor

Earth Day isn't every day. But for 26 years at the University, it has been an annual celebration.

Over this period of time, the meaning behind the day intended to raise environmental awareness has changed, said Lacey Phillabaum, a member of the Survival Center.

"It used to be a real grassroots event, but now Earth Day has been co-opted by corporations," she said. "The concept of Earth Day is kind of a joke at this time. People wear their Earth Day t-shirts, but they still drink their coffee in cups they can't recycle."

"So Earth Day isn't every day. Every day is exploitation day."

For this reason, Phillabaum said, the message of this year's celebration is that action to save the earth should be carried out each day. Work to stop clear-cutting and other forms of environmental degradation should happen each day, not just the one day of the year that is dedicated to saving the earth.

Kevin Aaron, also a member of the Survival Center, said he hopes Earth Week events will inspire people to become involved in environmental issues on a regular basis.

Karyn Kaplan, the recycling program manager said people have started to feel more personally involved in these issues since the beginning of Earth Day. In part, the reason people feel more personally affected by environmental degradation has resulted from events like Earth Day and legislation that rolled back environmental protection during the 1980s, she said.

"Every year, the student population entering the University is much more [environmentally aware]," she said.

Kaplan said she thinks awareness about these issues is increasing because members of the Baby Boomer generation were the ones who began Earth Day. Since then, the children of these individuals have been taught more about environmental issues, she said.

On campus, this has translated into the creation



COURTESY PHOTO
An environmentalist sits atop a tripod to protest the First timber sale in the Umpqua National Forest.

of an environmental studies major, a campus recycling program and other efforts of students, administrators and other members of the campus community.

"I think that on the campus right now environmental thinking has been totally incorporated into the University," she said.

Events for this year's Earth Day were planned by the Survival Center in conjunction with groups including the Solar Information Center, Campus Recycling and OSPRG. Earth Week begins today with a 10:30 a.m. rally in the EMU Courtyard called "Corporate Hands off Public Lands." A march to the Forest Service Office calling for zero extraction on public lands will follow, Phillabaum said.

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Corporate Hands Off Public Lands! April 22, come protest the destruction of the last of the ancient forests on public land. Inspirational music from Laura Kemp, Peter Wilde and Leslie Hemstreet and impassioned words from Tim Ingalsbee of Cascadia Fire Ecology Education Project, Mick Garvin of Cascadia Forest Defenders, and Diane Schwartz from Land, Air, Water. A march to the Eugene branch of the US Forest Service will begin at 3:30. At 5 p.m. there will be a potluck and drum circle by the river at the Autzen Footbridge. Born in Fire, the newly revised video about Warner Creek, and Last Chance for the Umpqua, a movie about the 1,000 year old trees falling in Southern Oregon will be shown at 7 p.m. in 100 Willamette.

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