

The History of Earth Day

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Jordyn Blosser (right) and her friend, both second-grade students from Ramstein Elementary School, plant a tree together in honor of Earth Day on April 22, 2015, at Ramstein Air Base, Germany. Photo by: U.S. Air Force photo/Staff Sgt. Sara Keller

Earth Day was founded in 1970. It is a day to learn about nature and the planet. Today, Earth Day is celebrated around the world. Earth Day was created by Senator Gaylord Nelson. He wanted people to care about the Earth. Nelson hoped to raise awareness of pollution. He thought this would make people care about protecting the planet.

In the 1960s, Americans became more aware of pollution. Before then, protecting the planet was not something people cared about very much. Only a small number of people were working on big problems like pollution. Companies polluted without getting in trouble. People drove big cars that used lots of gasoline. Not many Americans recycled. Most did not even know what recycling was.

Dreams of a large event

Senator Gaylord Nelson was a Senator from Wisconsin. He came up with the idea for Earth Day. He wanted everyone to know the planet was in danger. Around the same time, students in colleges across the country were protesting. They wanted the United States to end its war in Vietnam.

Nelson was inspired by these protests. He dreamed of a large event about protecting the Earth. It would force people to take the problem seriously.

Nelson announced his idea in 1969. He invited the whole country to take part. Letters and telephone calls came in from everywhere. He felt people really cared about what was happening to the planet. Earth Day gave them a way to show it.

On April 22, 1970, events were held in most American cities. People gathered and marched. Singers and bands performed. Congress spoke to voters at Earth Day events.



Protecting people and nature

The first Earth Day worked. It raised awareness about environmental problems. It also made people care about the planet. After Earth Day, more people thought protecting the planet was important. During the 1970s, many important environmental laws were passed. For example, in December 1970, the Environmental Protection Agency was created. It protects people and nature.

Since 1970, Earth Day events have grown. In 1990, Earth Day went global. 200 million people in over 140 nations took part. In 2000, millions of people got involved. Events took place in 184 countries.



Today, more than 1 billion people celebrate Earth Day. It is one of the largest events in the world.

Quiz

- 1 Based on the article, which of the following is TRUE?
- (A) Earth Day was founded in America in the 1950s.
 - (B) The goal of Earth Day is to raise money for the environment.
 - (C) Senator Gaylord Nelson wanted people to know the planet was in danger.
 - (D) Today, about 1 million people celebrate Earth Day around the world.
- 2 Which sentence from the section "Protecting people and nature" shows the MAIN goal of the first Earth Day?
- (A) It raised awareness about environmental problems.
 - (B) Since 1970, Earth Day events have grown.
 - (C) 200 million people in over 140 nations took part.
 - (D) It is one of the largest events in the world.
- 3 Which of the following happened FIRST?
- (A) Earth Day was created by Senator Gaylord Nelson.
 - (B) The Environmental Protection Agency was created.
 - (C) Earth Day events were held in different cities across America.
 - (D) Companies polluted the environment without getting in trouble.
- 4 Read the section "Protecting people and nature."
- What is the MAIN reason why the Environmental Protection Agency was created?
- (A) because many important environmental laws were passed
 - (B) because many people wanted to take care of the planet
 - (C) because Senator Gaylord Nelson wanted to create it
 - (D) because the United States was at war with Vietnam