

## Climate on Tap

Happy 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Earth Day!  
1970-2020

Facilitator:  
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What do you think were the issues we faced on the first Earth Day in 1970?



Take a few minutes to ponder this, then share your thoughts with those at your table or with the person next to you.

## First, a history of Earth Day



Los Angeles, 1960

In the decades leading up to the first Earth Day, Americans were consuming vast amounts of leaded gas through massive and inefficient automobiles. Industry belched out smoke and sludge with little fear of the consequences from either the law or bad press. Air pollution was commonly accepted as the smell of prosperity. Until this point, mainstream America remained largely oblivious to environmental concerns and how a polluted environment threatens human health.

## *Silent Spring*, 1962



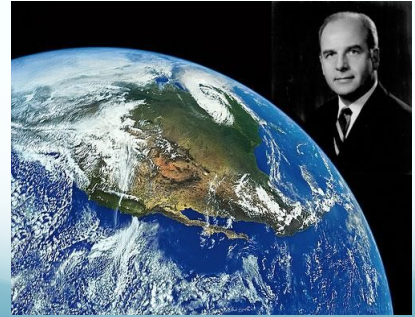
However, the stage was set for change with the publication of Rachel Carson's New York Times bestseller *Silent Spring* in 1962. *The book represented a watershed moment, selling more than 500,000 copies in 24 countries as it raised public awareness and concern for living organisms, the environment and the inextricable links between pollution and public health.*

## Earth Week, 1970

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WbwC281uzUs>

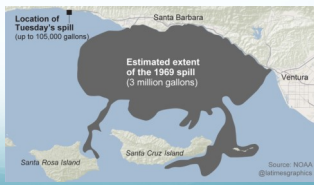


## Gaylord Nelson, founder Earth Day 1970



Earth Day founder Gaylord Nelson came up with the idea for a national day to focus on the environment after Nelson, then a U.S. Senator from Wisconsin, witnessed the ravages of a massive oil spill in Santa Barbara, California, in 1969.

Inspired by the student anti-war movement, Senator Nelson realized that if he could infuse the energy of anti-war protests with an emerging public consciousness about air and water pollution, it would force environmental protection onto the national political agenda.



April 22, falling between Spring Break and Final Exams, was selected as the date.

On April 22, 1970, 20 million Americans — at the time, 10% of the total population of the United States — 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 individually against oil spills, polluting factories and power plants, raw sewage, toxic dumps, pesticides, freeways, the loss of wilderness and the extinction of wildlife united on Earth Day around these shared common values.

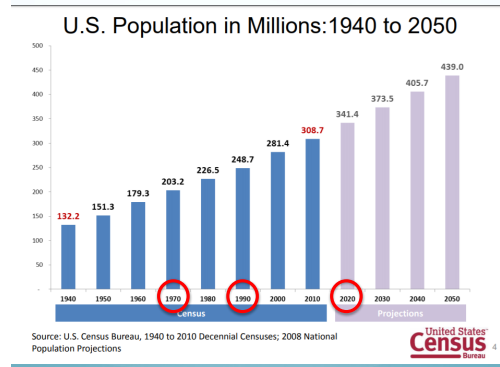


Nixon looking out at Earth Day marchers ... talks to Haldeman ... wonders how many Republican voters are in the huge crowd. Earth Day 1970 achieved a rare political alignment, enlisting support from Republicans and Democrats, rich and poor, urban dwellers and farmers, business and labor leaders. By the end of 1970, the first Earth Day led to the creation of the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the passage of the [Clean Air](#), [Clean Water](#) and [Endangered Species](#) Acts. "It was a gamble," Senator Gaylord recalled, "but it worked."



As 1990 approached, a group of environmental leaders approached Denis Hayes to organize another major campaign for the planet. 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 — the highest honor given to civilians in the United States — for his role as Earth Day founder.

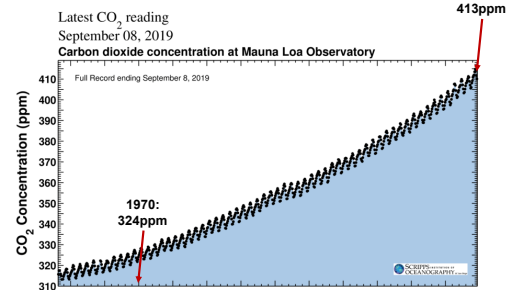
What are some positive changes you have seen or know of since 1970?



## Top 17 Environmental Problems

17. Genetic Modification of Crops
16. Waste Production
15. Population Growth
14. Water Pollution
13. Deforestation
12. Urban Sprawl
11. Overfishing
10. Acid Rain
9. Ozone Layer Depletion
8. Ocean Acidification
7. Air Pollution
6. Lowered Biodiversity
5. The Nitrogen Cycle
4. Natural Resource Use
3. Transportation
2. Polar Ice Caps
1. Climate Change

## Atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> since 1960



These days it's easy to feel gloomy about the state of earth's ecosystem. The climate continues to change, causing a host of issues, from more catastrophic weather and wildfires to the increased acidification of our oceans. Meanwhile, we have a president actively working to erode hard-won ecological protections. So it was a surprise to many when, in February, there was a huge win for the conservation community: the [Natural Resources Management Act](#) sailed through Congress and was signed into law, creating some 1.3 million acres of wilderness and six new national-park units and reauthorizing the venerable Land and Water Conservation Fund, which has funneled billions of dollars into conservation projects. The [John D. Dingell Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act](#), the single most important and wide-reaching public lands legislation package since the 1970s. This is an extraordinary achievement in today's political environment, but what exactly does the Dingell Act do? removes political uncertainty from its funding source and allows organizations that rely on its money to plan and execute long-term programs. Everything from maintenance on your local hiking trails to wetlands conservation will benefit.



Update ... 2020



Los Angeles, 1960

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## Celebrate Earth Week in Jefferson County!



Earth Day turns 50 this year!

Celebrate Earth Week 2020 with county-wide events happening ALL WEEK LONG!

[Visit the Earth Week Events Calendar](#)

<https://L2020.org/earth2020>

## Climate on Tap

*Thank you for coming!  
Questions?*

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