



WAY E-NEWS

A coalition of stakeholders committed to being innovative leaders
encouraging watershed-based planning, restoration and protection
www.watershedsyork.org

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EARTH DAY – Every day for everybody

WATERSHED CONTACTS

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING –
(717) 771-9870

CONSERVATION – (717) 840-7430

- Agricultural conservation planning
- Environmentally sensitive dirt & gravel road maintenance
- Environmental stewardship and watershed protection
- Erosion & sediment control
- Stormwater complaints

EMERGENCIES – (800) 541-4741

- Chemical and oil spills from transport trucks, trains and industrial facilities

ENVIRONMENTAL – (877) 333-1904

- Air Pollution from burning materials other than household garbage
- Illegal dumping of wastes
- Encroachment on surface waters and floodways
- Groundwater contamination
- Industrial sewage problems
- Mining/quarrying operational problems (800) 541-2050
- Pollution of water supply wells
- Underground storage tank failures

FISHERIES – (800) 541-2050

- Wildlife (fish, reptiles, amphibians) nuisance problems or to report violations

GAME & WILDLIFE – (888) 742-8001

- Wildlife (mammals or birds) to report violations or nuisance problems

ILLEGAL DUMPING – (877) 772-3673

- Illegal dumping on state forest and park lands

MUNICIPAL (Phonebook Blue Pages) –

- Air pollution by burning household garbage
- Dumping waste in surface waters
- Floodplain disturbances
- Municipal and residential septic/sewage problems
- Stormwater management

NOXIOUS PLANTS – (717) 772-5209

RECYCLING – (717) 845-1066

WETLANDS – (717) 249-2522



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HISTORY OF EARTH DAY

Earth Day – April 22 – each year marks the anniversary of the birth of the modern environmental movement in 1970.

Among other things, 1970 in the United States brought with it the Kent State shootings, the advent of fiber optics, "Bridge Over Troubled Water," Apollo 13, the Beatles' last album, the death of Jimi Hendrix, the birth of Mariah Carey, and the meltdown of fuel rods in the Savannah River nuclear plant near Aiken, South Carolina – an incident not acknowledged for 18 years.

It was into such a world that the very first Earth Day was born.

Earth Day founder Gaylord Nelson, then a U.S. Senator from Wisconsin, proposed the first nationwide environmental protest "to shake up the political establishment and force this issue onto the national agenda." "It was a gamble," he recalls, "but it worked."

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. Environment was a word that appeared more often in spelling bees than on the evening news.

Earth Day 1970 turned that all around.

On April 22, 20 million Americans took to the streets, parks, and auditoriums to demonstrate for a healthy, sustainable environment. Denis Hayes, the national coordinator, and his youthful staff organized 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 and the passage of the Clean Air, Clean Water, and Endangered Species acts.

Sen. Nelson was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom – the highest honor given to civilians in the United States – for his role as Earth Day founder.

As 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 the status of environmental issues on to 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.

As the millennium approached, Hayes agreed to spearhead another campaign, this time focused on global warming and a push for clean energy. Earth Day 2000 combined the big-picture feistiness of the first Earth Day with the international grassroots activism of Earth Day 1990. For 2000, Earth Day had the Internet to help link activists around the world. By the time April 22 rolled around, 5,000 environmental groups around the world were on board, reaching out to hundreds of millions of people in a record 184 countries. Events varied: A talking drum chain traveled from village to village in Gabon, Africa, for example, while hundreds of thousands of people gathered on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., USA.

Earth Day 2000 sent the message loud and clear that citizens the world 'round wanted quick and decisive action on clean energy. Now, the fight for a clean environment continues. We invite you to be a part of this history and a part of Earth Day. Discover energy you didn't even know you had. Feel it rumble through the grass roots under your feet and the technology at your fingertips. Channel it into building a clean, healthy, diverse world for generations to come.

Resource: <http://ww2.earthday.net/node/77>



EARTH DAY NETWORK

Founded by the organizers of the first Earth Day in 1970, Earth Day Network (EDN) promotes environmental citizenship and year round progressive action worldwide. Earth Day Network is a driving force steering environmental awareness around the world. Through Earth Day Network, activists connect, interact, and have an impact on their communities, and create positive change in local, national, and global policies. EDN's international network reaches over 17,000 organizations in 174 countries, while the domestic program engages 5,000 groups and over 25,000 educators coordinating millions of community development and environmental protection activities throughout the year. Earth Day is the only event celebrated simultaneously around the globe by people of all backgrounds, faiths and nationalities. More than a half billion people participate in our campaigns every year.

Our mission is to grow and diversify the environmental movement worldwide, and to mobilize it as the most effective vehicle for promoting a healthy, sustainable planet. We pursue our mission through education, politics, events, and consumer activism.

Earth Day Network's Mission Statement

EDN seeks to grow and diversify the environmental movement worldwide, and to mobilize it as the most effective vehicle for promoting a healthy, sustainable planet. We pursue these goals through education, politics, events, and consumer activism.

Earth Day Network's programs and activities are guided by the following goals

- Promote Civic Engagement — EDN works with partner organizations to provide opportunities for all citizens to become active at the local, state, national and global levels.
- Broaden the Meaning of "Environment" — EDN is committed to expanding the definition of "environment" to include all issues that affect our health, our communities and our environment, such as air and water pollution, deteriorating schools, public transportation and access to jobs, rising rates of asthma and cancer, and lack of funding for parks and recreation. We have included all of these issues in a unique and comprehensive research document, the [Urban Environment Report](#), which ranks the health of 72 U.S. cities by more than 200 environmental, health and quality of life indicators.
- Mobilize Communities — EDN and our [Campaign for Communities \(C4C\)](#) partners successfully educated and motivated new and infrequent voters in eight states to pass strong environmental laws during the 2006 election. We are continuing this effort for the 2008 election with the goal of creating reliable and consistent environmental citizens among low-income and minority communities. All this follows our success during the 2004 presidential election when EDN and our C4C partners registered and turned out one million voters. In 2006 and 2007, EDN helped create a solid environmental platform for the [National Latino Congreso](#). The 2007 Congreso established a long-term environmental agenda for Latino leaders that includes [EDN's call for a moratorium on coal-fired power plants](#) and a substantial increase in funding and support for renewable energy and green schools.
- Groundbreaking Environmental Education Programs — Earth Day Network's new [GREEN Schools Campaign](#) will seek to green all of America's k-12 schools within a generation. EDN uses innovative education tools to promote civic participation and to develop a sense of environmental responsibility among all citizens. Our programs and activities inform and inspire young people and people of color to become environmental leaders. In its pilot 2005-2006 school year, the [National Civic Education Project](#) empowered students in Cincinnati to push their school board to adopt green building practices. This powerful program continues to grow, providing young people with the skills, pride and passion they need to address environmental health issues affecting their communities.
- Support Earth Day Events and Actions around the World — From greening schools in post-Katrina New Orleans to improving water and sanitation services in a refugee community in Ghana, EDN supports and coordinates thousands of Earth Day events worldwide each year. [Earth Day, April 22](#), is the largest secular holiday in the world, now celebrated by more than one billion people.

Our Membership in Earth Share means you can donate at work

[Earth Share](#), a nationwide network of America's leading non-profit environmental and conservation organizations, works to promote environmental education and charitable giving through workplace giving campaigns. Earth Share is an opportunity for environmentally conscious employees and workplaces to support hundreds of environmental groups at once through a charitable giving drive. Since Earth Share's founding in 1988, thousands of employees across the nation have generously pledged their financial support for the important work of Earth Share's member organizations. As more and more businesses are opting to offer environmental giving options alongside other approved charities, Earth Share now participates in campaigns at hundreds of public and private sector workplaces, including the federal government's Combined Federal Campaign (CFC); American Airlines; Dell; American Express; Hewlett Packard; Aveda; Sears; and many more.

Resource: <http://ww2.earthday.net/>



ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Welcome! to our award-winning Educator's Network. Below find over 300 standard-based lessons, school greening tips, grants for teachers, and more than 25,000 teachers to share ideas with. Sign up here to receive updates from the Teacher's Network.

Programs and Campaigns

- [Sign up for the EDN Teacher's Network](#)

New From The Department

- [Film Premiere and Awesome Earth Day Activity for Kids!!!](#)
- [Free Earth Day offer: The BBC's Planet Earth and History of Planet Earth videos here](#)
- [Help Thomas Jefferson High School Go Solar by Earth Day!!!](#)

New Climate Change Curriculum

- [Lesson One: Equity and Climate](#)
- [Lesson Two: Food, Water and Climate](#)
- [Lesson Three: Greenbuilding and Climate](#)
- [Lesson Four: Invasive Species and Climate](#)
- [Lesson Five: Biodiversity and Climate](#)

Virtual Online Tours

- [Take a virtual tour of Tijuca Forest National Park in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil](#)
- [Take a virtual tour of Walden Pond](#)

Earth Day Network's Teacher of the Quarter

Each season, EDN will spotlight one outstanding member of our 25,000+ Educators' Network. Earth Day Network is a proud partner with the National Education Program. We invite you to celebrate [National Education Week](#) April 13-19th!

- [Stuart Moody- EDN's Spring 2008 Feature Teacher](#)



AIR POLLUTION

The Problem

Unhealthy levels of air pollution in many American cities are harming the health of residents, especially those who suffer from asthma. Although clean air laws that regulate industrial smokestacks, car engines and other sources of pollution have resulted in cleaner air, major sources of air pollution remain. Among the largest remaining sources of harmful pollutants are coal-fired electric power plants that were built before clean air laws were written in the early 1970s. These power plants are permitted to release thousands of tons of sulfur dioxide, nitrous oxide and mercury into the air each year, putting the health of millions of Americans at risk, particularly those who live in urban areas and particularly those who suffer from asthma.

Who Is Affected?

According to the American Lung Association, by 2020 asthma will affect 1 in 14 Americans and 1 in 5 families. Asthma is the leading serious chronic illness in children: approximately 25 percent of children between the ages of 15 and 17 have their activities limited due to asthma. Medical studies increasingly show that air pollution plays a major role in triggering asthma attacks. Exposure to air pollution has been linked to increased use of asthma medications and an increased rate of emergency room visits and hospitalizations for asthma sufferers.

More than 2 million American children with asthma, and a disproportionate number of children of color, live in areas that do not meet federal clean air standards. Approximately 61.3 percent of African American children, 69.2 percent of Hispanic children and 67.7 percent of Asian American children live in areas that fail to meet federal smog standards. In 2000, African American children were three to four times more likely than white children to be hospitalized for asthma, five times more likely to seek care for asthma in an emergency room, and three times more likely to die from asthma than white children.

What You Can Do

Find out if the air quality in your community may be endangering the health of your children. There are many sources of information on air quality including federal agencies such as the [Environmental Protection Agency](#), state and local air quality officials, the American Lung Association, and even local news sources, which often include reports on air quality as part of the daily weather report.

Contact your elected officials and ask them to strengthen clean air laws to reduce air pollution from coal-burning power plants. Your local Representative and your state's Senators have the ability to pass laws that can push these dirty power plants to clean up their acts. Local elected officials like your mayor and city council can also put pressure on federal officials to pass stronger clean air laws.

Sponsor an asthma awareness event for your community. Possible resources for this type of event include local hospitals or clinics, your local chapter of the American Lung Association, or local public health agencies.

Find out where your elected officials stand on clean air issues by attending town hall meetings and writing them letters. You can also look for information from national and state groups that track the environmental voting records of elected officials such as the [League of Conservation Voters](#) or your [state conservation voter league](#).

[Register to vote](#) and vote for the candidates that will protect your community's air from pollution.

Other Resources

The American Lung Association reports each year on urban air quality in its "State of the Air" report and has fact sheets and other resources on asthma and on air pollution. Check their [web site](#) or contact your local Lung Association chapter. You can also obtain information on environmental quality in your community from national and state environmental protection agencies such as the federal [Environmental Protection Agency](#) and from the national environmental group [Environmental Defense](#).

Many national environmental groups are working to pass stronger clean air laws. Their web sites can give you information about laws that your elected officials should be supporting. The [Clear the Air coalition web site](#) includes information about national issues and can also give you information about air pollution problems and sources in your community.



CLIMATE CHANGE

The Earth Day Network Climate Change Solutions Campaign is a three year global campaign to educate and motivate all levels of the global community including k-12 and college students, governments, corporations, and religious institutions. Civil rights, religious, and social leaders joined Earth Day Network the week of April 16th through April 20th to deliver a tough new message to Congress on climate, demanding that there be no "grandfathering" of pollution permits and a reduction in carbon emissions. The leaders joined their voices to thousands of people who have signed Earth Day Network's petition to Congress, making Earth Day on the Hill a groundbreaking initiative to bring new voices and policy solutions to the Climate Change debate.

Climate change solutions begin with us! Get active NOW!

- Speak Up- Tell Congress to [close the loopholes](#) in the lighting legislation
- Sign Up- Join Earth Day Network as a [Member](#) and help us fight global warming
- Tally Up- Measure your [Ecological Footprint](#)
- Own Up- Take steps now in your [home](#), [office](#) and [school](#)

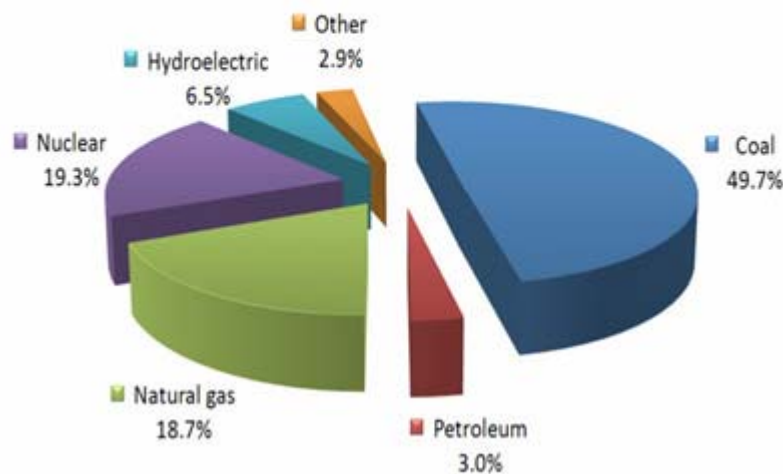
Climate Change Action Tool Kit

- [Green Travel Tips](#)
- [Earth Day in a Box](#)
- [Climate Change and Communities of Faith](#)
- [Compact Fluorescent Light Bulb Fact Sheet](#)
- [Environmental Tips Video Series](#)
- [Climate Change Fact Sheet \(In Spanish , In French \)](#)
- [Global Climate Change and Population Growth](#)

Climate Change and Kids

Join [EDN Teacher's Network](#) for free and find lessons, games, and more. Here's how kids can help their schools save energy - [EDN School Energy Audit](#). And, here are some ways for [parents and kids to mark Earth Day 2007](#).

Electricity Fuel Mix in the US 2005 (US Dept. of Energy)



Courtesy of the US Department of Energy



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF PLASTIC SHOPPING BAGS

The raw material of plastic bags is oil. Therefore, the more we use plastic bags, the more we waste oil - a non-renewable energy source. The petroleum-based plastic bags take decades to break down, so if they are not recycled they litter. It creates visual pollution: in the streets, on the beaches etc. Also, they can clog roadside drains, which could cause street flooding during heavy rainfall.

Plastic bags can be recycled but it rarely happens: according to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, only 1% of plastic bags were recycled in 2000, against twenty percent for paper bags.

They endanger wildlife and particularly sea life such as sea turtles and dolphins which can die of entanglement, suffocation, and ingestion because they assume that these bags are jellyfish.

What is being done

For the past few years, there has been rising international awareness regarding the damaging and dangerous impact on the environment of plastic bags. Governments all over the world have decided to get involved in that particular issue: Some governments have decided to ban them: Bangladesh, Bhutan and Zanzibar. Plastic bags should no more be given for free in China from June 1st. These bags are surcharged in Germany, South Africa, Ireland and Israel. Several countries try and promote, through major retailers, the use of cloth bags, paper bags or grocery bags: United Kingdom (with Tesco), France (with Carrefour), New Zealand.

In the U.S.

Plastic bags are already used less than paper bags by American consumers, and there have been no government actions to further curb their use. But large cities such as San Francisco and Portland, OR, have planned or plan to ban plastic bags, whereas Seattle, WA will certainly launch a 20 cent "green fee" on plastic bags.

What YOU can still do!

- Reuse your plastic shopping bags: use them as trash so as not to buy others that are more energy wasting; use them for storage.

- Use paper bags rather than plastic bags when you are given the choice.
- Use reusable grocery bags, which always have a lower environmental impact.



HEALTHY & AFFORDABLE HOMES

The Problem

The United States faces a significant shortage of safe and affordable housing, a crisis that is most profound in low income communities and communities of color. Old and decaying housing—which makes up the supply of affordable housing in many of these communities—present significant health hazards to residents from sources such as lead paint and aging ventilation and water systems. Residents of these communities are also more likely to live near pollution sources such as industrial plants and toxic waste sites.

Who Is Affected?

Nowhere in the United States does a minimum wage job provide enough income for a household to afford to rent a two-bedroom home at the local fair market rate. This gap is growing: monthly housing costs grow between five and fifteen percent annually while the minimum wage has remained at \$5.15 since 1997. In 2003, the national average wage needed to make the national average rent payment was \$14.66—almost triple the minimum wage. As a result of this gap, many low income workers pay more money than they can afford for housing at the expense of other living costs such as medical care, childcare, and even food.

In a tight market, decent housing conditions become difficult to find as landlords charge as much as the market will bear and cut back on maintenance of older, less desirable units. One in eight rental households has either moderate or severe physical problems in their housing unit, and half of these have high cost burdens and/or are overcrowded as well.

What You Can Do

Learn how to make your home healthier—the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development offers a guide called [“Help Yourself to a Healthy Home”](#) that gives suggestions for dealing with such problems as lead paint, poor drinking water quality, and mold and moisture.

Become an advocate for healthier housing—a good source of information on safe and affordable housing issues is the [Alliance for Healthy Homes](#).

Find out where your elected officials stand on healthy and affordable housing issues. Attend town meetings and ask them tough questions or write letters and ask for their position on the issue. You can also look for information from national and state groups that track the environmental voting records of elected officials such as the [League of Conservation Voters](#) or your [state conservation voter league](#).

[Register to vote](#) and vote for candidates who will work for safe and affordable housing in your community.

Other Resources

The [Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now \(ACORN\)](#) works for safe and healthy housing in communities across the country and their website has information on local housing advocacy groups and community issues.



HEALTHY SCHOOLS

The Problem

Many of our nation’s schools are in poor repair, making them a threat to our children’s health and ability to grow and learn. In 1995, the U.S. General Accounting Office reported that “While laws compel children to attend school, some school buildings may be unsafe or even harmful to children’s health.” The average age of U.S. public schools is 42 years old and over 60 percent of schools report at least one serious maintenance problem. More than half of these schools report at least one unsatisfactory environmental condition such as poor ventilation.

Tight school budgets mean that school buildings are cleaned less frequently, allowing dust and mold to build up — both trigger asthma and allergies. Poorly maintained ventilation systems may also contribute to poor air quality in older school buildings and poor health among students. When schools are cleaned, the chemicals used may be harmful to children’s development. The pesticides used on school grounds are more harmful to growing children than they are to adults and may be used at unsafe levels.

In addition, a substantial number of schools, particularly those in low income communities, are built on the cheapest land available — which may be near polluting industries or may have been contaminated by previous industrial uses.

Who Is Affected?

Children are more vulnerable than adults to toxins in their environments due to their smaller size, developing bodies and normal childhood behavior such as crawling, digging in dirt and putting objects in their mouths. Scientists are beginning to link rising levels of childhood asthma and increased rates of hyperactivity in children to exposure to pesticides, toxic chemicals and pollutants.

What You Can Do

Join with other parents to perform a “toxic audit” of your child’s school. Find out what types of chemicals are used in your child’s school, if the land it’s built on contains toxic chemicals, what sources of pollution are nearby, and what maintenance issues could be triggering asthma and allergies in students. There are a number of “healthy school” groups and coalitions that can provide toolkits and other information for your audit, such as the [Healthy Schools Network](#) and [Tools for Healthy Schools](#).

Join with other parents in your state to fight for healthier schools. Many states have coalitions fighting for laws and funding to make public schools healthier for children. For example, [California’s Healthy Schools Campaign](#) successfully passed a law that requires California public schools to reduce their use of pesticides on school grounds. Search the Internet to find out if your state has a coalition fighting for healthier schools.

Find out where your local and state officials stand on healthy schools. Attend town meetings and ask them whether they support more funding for school maintenance and reduced use of toxic chemicals in schools.

[Register to vote](#) and vote for the candidates who will work to clean up your schools.

Other Resources

To find out more about how toxic chemicals and other environmental hazards affect children, contact [Physicians for Social Responsibility](#) or the Center for Health, Environment and Justice’s “[Childproofing Our Communities](#)” project.



MERCURY IN OUR COMMUNITIES

The Problem

Mercury is a toxic metal that can harm the brain development of young children and unborn babies. Although mercury can occur naturally in the environment, much of the toxic mercury in the United States comes from a single source—coal-burning electric power plants. These plants emit mercury into the air as they burn coal, and the mercury is then brought to earth in rain, ending up in rivers, lakes and streams and in many kinds of fish. The Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and 43 state governments have issued advisories warning people, especially women and children, to avoid or limit eating fish due to widespread mercury contamination.

Who Is Affected?

Pregnant women and children who eat fish contaminated with toxic mercury are at risk. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration recently warned pregnant women, and women who might become pregnant, not to eat certain types of fish, including shark and swordfish, not to eat more than 12 ounces per week of other fish, including such commonly eaten fish as canned tuna, and to take care in eating fish caught by family and friends in freshwater lakes, rivers and streams. The FDA also cautioned nursing mothers and young children from eating these types of fish.

What You Can Do

Find out if lakes, rivers and streams in your community are contaminated with mercury and warn friends and family members against eating fish caught in those streams. Information on bodies of water contaminated with mercury is available from the [Environmental Protection Agency](#) and from state environmental agencies.

Limit how much fish you and your children eat. [Guidelines for children](#), pregnant women and nursing mothers are available from the Food and Drug Administration.

Contact your Representative and Senators and ask them to support legislation that would reduce mercury emissions from power plants. Write to President Bush and ask that he support regulations to reduce mercury from power plants. Find out more from the [Clear the Air coalition](#).

Find out where your elected officials stand on cleaning up mercury from power plants. Attend town meetings and ask them tough questions or write letters and ask for their position on the issue. You can also look for information from national and state groups that track the environmental voting records of elected officials such as the [League of Conservation Voters](#) or your [state conservation voter league](#).

[Register to vote](#) and vote for candidates who will reduce mercury emissions from power plants and make fish safe to eat for everyone.

Other Resources

Find out more about the issue of mercury contamination in fish and the link to power plant emissions at the [U.S. PIRG website](#). Find out more about how mercury affects children’s brain development from [Physicians for Social Responsibility](#).



URBAN PARKS

The Problem

Urban parks provide a range of benefits to communities, ranging from air and water purification to building a sense of community. Recreation opportunities in parks can help to reduce crime by offering young people activities to fill their time and building skills and self esteem. Green spaces can help attract new businesses and jobs, increase property values, and generally contribute to a better quality of life for the

surrounding community. Unfortunately, in many metropolitan areas, parks and recreation opportunities are concentrated in affluent and suburban neighborhoods, while low-income, inner-city communities have inadequate and severely overcrowded public parks that offer far fewer recreational programs.

Who Is Affected?

The neighborhoods most in need of recreation opportunities and open space generally have the least parkland, the fewest facilities, and the greatest difficulties maintaining them as safe havens. Although elected officials generally declare their support for parks and recreation programs, more and better services are available to residents of suburban areas than to those who live in less affluent rural and urban areas. The single largest source of funding for parks, the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, has faced substantial cuts in recent years, and funding for urban parks has taken a back seat to other programs as many cities struggle with reduced tax revenues and tight budgets.

What You Can Do

Work to improve conditions at your local park by joining or starting a friends of the park organization. You can find a guide to starting a park friends group on the [Brookline Greenspace Alliance web site](#).

Look for resources through your local government or community redevelopment programs to turn an empty lot in your neighborhood into a park or community garden. Find out more about how to start a community garden from the [American Community Gardening Association](#).

Find out where your elected officials stand on urban parks issues by attending town meetings or writing letters. You can also look for information from national and state groups that track the environmental voting records of elected officials such as the [League of Conservation Voters](#) or your [state conservation voter league](#).

[Register to vote](#) and vote for the candidates who will work to support your community's parks.

Other Resources

Get more information on urban parks issues from the [Project for Public Spaces](#) and the [Trust for Public Land](#).



TIPS ON WRITING OP-ED ARTICLES

Letter to the Editor and get it published!

Letters to the editor are an easy and effective way for us to voice our opinion to policy makers, corporations and the general public on the negative impacts of climate change. You can use letters to correct or interpret facts in response to inaccuracies, statements by corporations or government officials, to explain the connection between the news story and your priority issues, or to praise or criticize an article. The letters section is one of the most frequently read segments of newspapers.

Know your paper's policy

Find out the newspaper's policy for printing letters. Some have word limits and all require that you include your name, address and phone number. Your address and phone number will not be printed, but most publications will want to call you before they print your letter to confirm that you really did write the letter and that you want to have it published.

Keep it simple

Keep your points short and clear, and stick to one subject. If you focus on one specific issue, you'll already have an edge on the writer who thinks they will be able to fill up their letter with a laundry list of details. Also, stick to commonly used terms and avoid jargon. Connect to basic values such as clean water and healthy communities.

Make your letter short

Make your first sentence short, compelling and catchy. Be direct and engaging. Try to hold each sentence to a minimum of 20 words. Your whole letter should ideally be a maximum of 150 words. No more than four paragraphs total, two paragraphs is best.

Get personal

Newspapers, at their core, are community entities. Editors will be much more likely to publish a letter, and the letter will have much more impact, if it demonstrates local relevance. The tips below are especially relevant if you are submitting a letter to the editor to your local paper.

- Use local statistics. For example, a letter focusing on climate change should point out what is at stake in your local area.
- Use personal stories. For example, if you or someone in your family relies on agriculture to make a living, for example, you should talk about your experience in a letter to the editor addressing your concerns about how climate change will affect the industry.
- Use names to encourage action. If a letter to the editor mentions a Representative or Senator's name, they will see it as their aides comb through all of the press in their district. They care about how they are being perceived in the district, and they will pay attention to a letter that asks them to take a specific action. You should also urge readers to support your position and to let their elected officials know their views
- Use your credentials. If you have expertise in the area you are writing about, be sure to include that information even though it may not be printed in your letter.

