

*For Eye on the Environment 3/29/15*

## **Earth Day Celebrates a Milestone**

By Arne Anselm, Ventura County Watershed Protection District

Earth Day is celebrating its 45th anniversary on April 22. What started in 1970 in the U.S. and was observed by 20 million people, has grown to a movement involving 192 countries and 200 million people worldwide. Earth Day emerged as a response to out-of-control pollution of our air, water and land. Anyone living in Southern California back then can recall the damage from the Santa Barbara oil spill, or the harsh air that blanketed the area, making it difficult to breathe. Litter was a common sight along highways, and pretty much anywhere else where there were people.

We've come a long way since the first Earth Day. Gone are the smog alerts that used to keep students indoors at school. The air is visibly cleaner, and through recycling policies and local efforts such as street sweeping, the amount of litter in the environment is down despite a growing population. According to the EPA, new cars, SUVs and pickup trucks run 99 percent cleaner than their 1970 counterparts. Pollutants that were common in the air in 1970 have dropped an average of 72 percent even as the gross domestic product rose by 219 percent.

While there is a lot to celebrate, it is important to use Earth Day as a reminder to take care of the world. One area we always need to focus on are Ventura County's watersheds. These are the rivers, creeks and wetlands that receive water runoff from the open space in the mountains, but also from the city networks of gutters, pipes and open channels. The ultimate destination is the ocean.

Your help is still needed to keep our rivers and the ocean free of pollutants. Keep trash, pet waste, fertilizer, household chemicals, car fluids, yard waste and sprinkler runoff out of street gutters. All gutters eventually lead to a natural creek or the ocean. Pollution that enters our gutters can not only affect the health of swimmers, but can greatly diminish the natural resources needed for wildlife that call our wetlands and ocean home.

Attend an Earth Day festival in your city. These events will have interactive activities for kids, adults and families; educational exhibits; compost workshops; tree, plant and compost giveaways; gray water workshops; green-friendly vendors; and sustainable vehicles on display. It is a good way to learn about new ways to help the earth.

Here is a list of some of Ventura County's Earth Day events. All have free admission.

- Oxnard Earth Day 2015 - April 4, 2015 – Plaza Park - 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
- Ojai Earth Day 2015 – April 18, 2015 - Oak Grove School – 4:00 p.m.
- Thousand Oaks 2015 Arbor/Earth Day Celebration – April 18, 2015 - Conejo Creek Park North - 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
- Moorpark - Arbor/Earth Day – April 24, 2015
- Ventura Earth Day Ecofest – April 25, 2015 - Seaside/Promenade Park and Surfer's Point Boardwalk – 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

- Simi Valley Arbor Day – April 25, 2015 – Rancho Tapo Community Park – 11:00 a.m.
- Simi Valley High School Earth Day/Pride Day, April 26, 2015

For those who want to make an immediate impact on the environment, take part in one of these cleanup days:

- Ventura Earth Day Beach Cleanup – April 18, 2015 - Marina Park - 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
- Santa Clara River Earth Day Cleanup – April 25, 2015 - Motel 6 (3360 Johnson Dr., Ventura) – 9:00 a.m. - noon

Earth Day organizers in Ventura County are committed to keeping an eye on the environment, and residents are willing to do their part every day so we don't return to a time when living with pollution was the norm.

*On The Net*

[www.cleanwatershed.org](http://www.cleanwatershed.org).

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