

1974

EC74-2035 Let's Do Something about our Environment

Janet Wilson

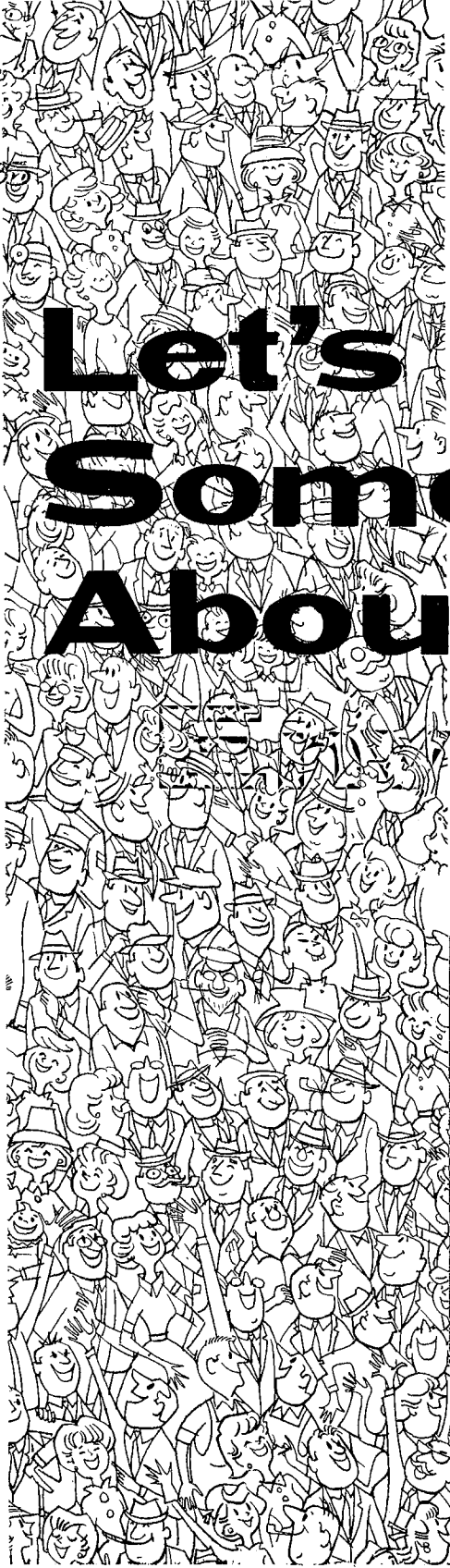
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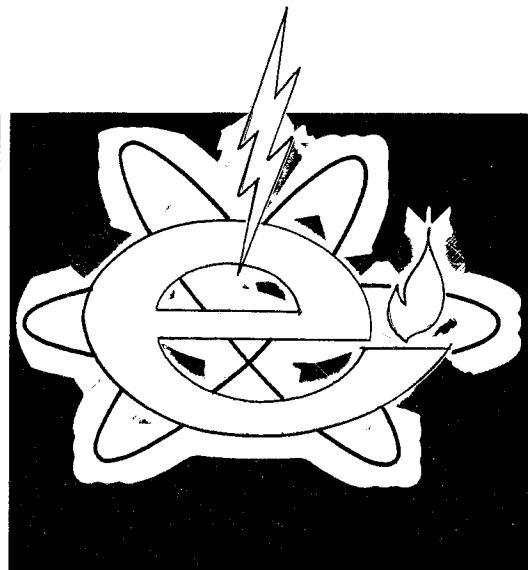
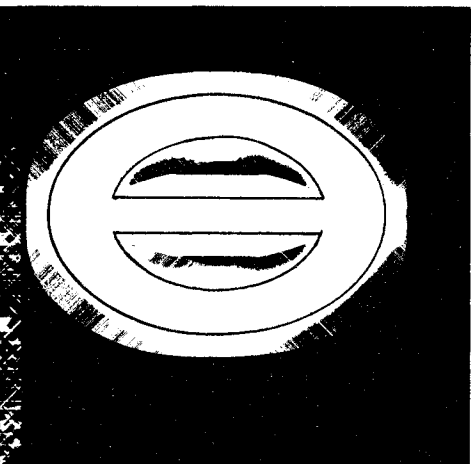
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Let's Do Something About Our ironment



Extension work in "Agriculture, Home Economics and Subjects relating thereto,"
The Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Agriculture and Natural
Resources, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Cooperating with the
Counties and the U. S. Department of Agriculture
J. L. Adams, Director

Let's Do Something About Our Environment

Janet Wilson
Extension Specialist (Consumer Education)

This bulletin is presented as a guide to practical, positive action that can be taken by concerned individuals or community groups for a better environment. Choose one or several plans, encourage others to do the same, and see results.

WATER POLLUTION AND CONSERVATION

What Causes Water Pollution?

Water pollution can be traced to two general sources—man and nature.

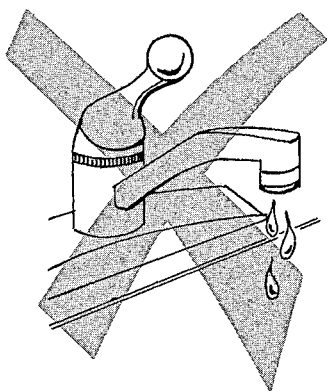
Natural water pollution occurs when there is an abnormal interrelationship between water and a natural contaminant. For example, a rock slide resulting from a storm might pour tons of rock and sediment into a stream. Very hard water could result from excessive mineral concentration. Fire started by lightning could destroy ground cover followed by water which causes soil erosion.

When people pollute, nature often cannot make sufficient adjustments to maintain life. We have not recognized nature's limitations or have ignored them by failing to use our water supply wisely.

The specific causes of water pollution are as varied as people's activities.

What YOU Can Do to Stop Water Pollution and Conserve Water

You may waste several gallons of precious water as it runs to get cold enough to drink. Instead, put a quart or gallon of water in the refrigerator so it will be cold when you want it.

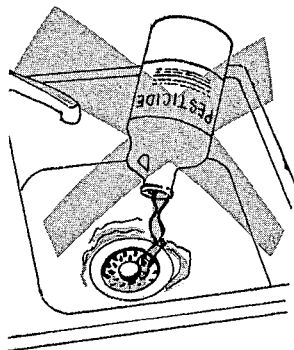


Don't run the water while shaving. Fill the basin and save gallons of water.

Make periodic checks of all water taps and plumbing connections in the home. Repair leaky taps immediately. One tap can leak gallons of water every hour. Call in qualified experts for the bigger jobs.

Educate yourselves and your children. Provide awareness in your home of the environment's importance. Seek to have courses on ecology, conservation and the environment added to the curriculum of your school system.

Do not put things down the drain that go into the garbage can. Problem materials are cooking fats (feed it to the birds) coffee grounds (add these to compost piles or earthworm colonies along with tea leaves, vegetable scraps and peelings. Compost can then be used to fertilize gardens, plants and lawns.)



Never dispose of pesticides by pouring them down the drain. Many are non-biodegradable, some break down bacterial action needed for properly operating sewage treatment plants and cesspools, resulting in polluted water running downstream or into the local water table.

To clean heavily soiled pots and pans, use baking soda and steel wool. It works easily, saves money and keeps chemicals and detergents out of waters that go down your drain and must be treated for reuse downstream.

Material adapted from the Ecology Action Guide "There is Still Time" published by the Garcia Corporation, 329 Alfred Ave, Teaneck, New Jersey 07666

Substitute washing soda for detergents when practical.

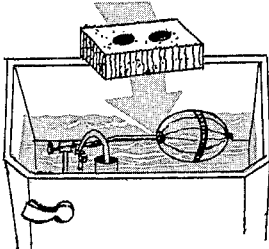


Avoid running half loads in the dishwasher or washing machine. It wastes water, and the extra cycles just add more waste and detergents to already burdened sewage and water treatment facilities. Look for appliances that can be set for partial loads.

If your community does not have a sewage treatment system, encourage legislation that will require it. If there is a treatment plant, strive to have it modernized or improved, if necessary.

If you are not on a municipal sewage treatment system, you probably have a cesspool or septic tank. Keep it in good operating order.

Bricks save water !

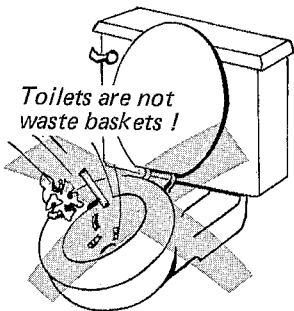


Sanitary traps keep noxious and objectionable gases from the sewage system out of your house. Keep them clean.

Bricks placed in a toilet's storage tank will reduce the amounts of water used for sanitary flushing. One source claims this method can save 300,000 gallons of water a day in a city of 100,000.

Don't use toilets as waste baskets. Cigarette filters, tampon cylinders, and hair are almost impossible to break down. They clog pumps and filters at sewage treatment plants, and cause problems in septic tanks.

Have your automobile checked for oil leaks around the pan, transmission and differential housing. Oil leaking onto the street will ultimately wind up as a pollutant in rivers and streams.

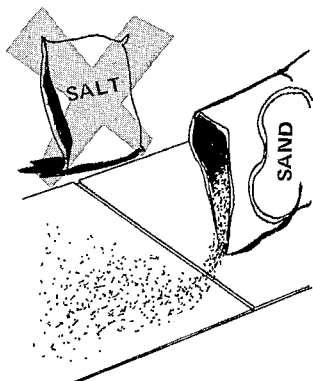


Keep your car well waxed. It will require fewer washings and hardly any soap or detergent. Generally, a few buckets of water and a chamois will do the job.

During the winter months, use sand or gravel instead of salt on sidewalks and driveways. Dissolved salt can injure plants and alter water conditions as it seeps through the ground.

Use lawn sprinklers only when absolutely necessary and after dark.

If your neighborhood doesn't have an anti-water pollution coordinating committee, organize one.

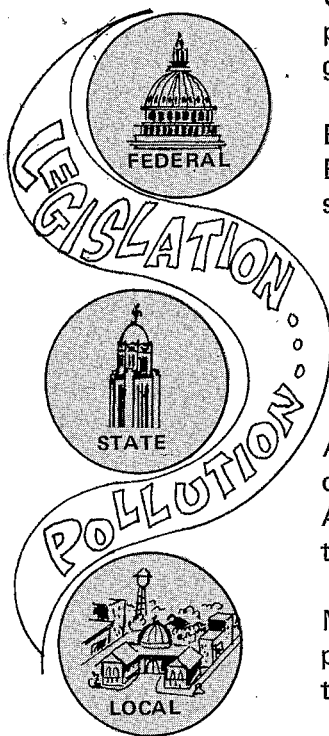


Learn about the biological and chemical composition of your water. One must know about water before he can understand pollution.

Learn about the origin of your water. If it is water from a reservoir or stream, how is it treated before use? If it comes from wells, how does the water travel to the well? How is it treated? Tour the city water system.

Check on your local water quality standards. Do they measure up to accepted standards? Are they enforced or do local industries and governments ignore them? Get the answers.

If your water is supplied by a municipal water company, get to know the members of the water board and outline your goals for them.



Check local, state and Federal governing bodies for legislation that could affect pollution efforts locally or at state and national levels. Add the influence of your group and your individual vote to positive anti-pollution and conservation measures.

Encourage improvement of waste treatment facilities. The American Home Economics Association, during its annual meeting in June 1973, issued this statement:

Presently available substitutes for phosphate are potential home safety hazards, are less effective in softening water and removing and suspending soil, may damage laundry and dishwashing equipment, and reduce the wear life of clothing. Phosphate bans may also nullify the positive effects of the Federal flammability regulation on children's sleepwear.

A resolution was then passed supporting the principle of the right of consumer choice in purchasing cleaning products, supporting the purposes of the Clean Water Act, and encouraging efforts toward removal of all algae growth producing nutrients through improved waste treatment facilities.

Meet with local elected officials and outline the goals of your group's water pollution and conservation programs. Make certain that they understand you intend to follow through with your plans.

(See section "How to Work Through Your Elected Officials in Environmental Issues.")

Check into the way local industries are using your water supply. Have your community action group point out misuse if it is occurring. Point out those companies who make good use of the supply, also.

Share anti-water pollution and conservation information with other individuals or groups in your or neighboring communities.

Adopt a mile of stream, river or lake front. You'll be amazed how a family or small group can effectively clean up a limited area and keep it clean. It's even fun.

Practice what you preach. Don't just pay lip service to the problems of pollution. Take every step and precaution necessary to prevent water pollution and conserve water at home.



AIR POLLUTION

Causes

In broad terms, transportation, industry, power generation, space heating, and refuse disposal are responsible for almost all the 143 million to 214 million tons of pollutants which constitute the nation's annual air pollution output.

Transportation of all kinds leads the pollution parade by pouring an estimated 86 million tons—about 60 percent—of the total pollutants into the air. Automobiles, according to private and governmental sources, are responsible for as much as 77 percent of the air pollutants found in some urban areas.

Industry and power generation have been cited as the sources of an estimated 18 and 14 percent respectively of the nation's air pollution. Together they spew out about 45 million tons of contaminants yearly. Contaminants from these sources are mainly health and property damaging sulfur oxides. When mixed with water they form corrosive sulfuric acid mists, and finally, particulate matter, a classification which includes soot and fly ash.

Space heating of homes and other buildings contributes less than 10 percent of the national air pollution output. Refuse disposal is responsible for less than 5 percent.

Air pollution costs U.S. citizens \$14.5 billion per year, and much of it cannot be controlled by individuals as they go about their daily activities. Air pollution, then, requires a massive effort by industry, governments and individuals functioning in groups.

There are, however, some ways every individual can participate to clean up the air we breathe.

What YOU Can Do To Fight Air Pollution

Have your household heating system checked annually. A properly functioning heating system minimizes pollution by reducing the amount of unburned or partially burned fuel. Make certain your fuel has a low sulfur content.

Periodically check filters on your home's heating and air conditioning systems. Replace worn or fouled filters.

Don't burn leaves. The smoke from your leaves contains particulate matter just as the smoke from an industrial stack.

Don't burn trash and garbage. Have paper and cans recycled (see section on recycling) and use garbage to start a compost heap.

If your community allows residential incinerators and you have one, be certain that it's in perfect operating order. Have it checked by experts. Check incineration procedures of local government buildings and school systems. Be certain they meet accepted standards.

Plant a garden, trees, grass, shrubs, etc. Growing green things absorb carbon dioxide, give off oxygen, help clean up the air, and add to your aesthetic well being.

Keep lawn mowers and other gasoline powered tools properly tuned to minimize exhaust emissions.

Be extra careful with camp fires, charcoal fires, and matches. Not only do forest and grass fires destroy valuable natural resources but they add to air pollution.

If you have a fireplace burn wood, not coal. Coal produces more smoke and noxious gases.

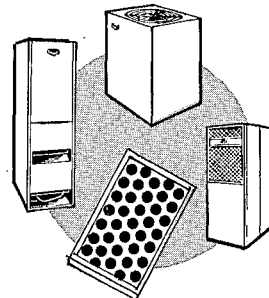
Reduce the amount of electricity you use to reduce the amount of power generation needed and the air pollution it creates. Contact your County Extension Agent for a series of seven fact sheets on "Energy Conservation in the Home."

Tune your automobile as often as required. A well tuned car will emit over 50 percent fewer pollutants than one that isn't running properly.

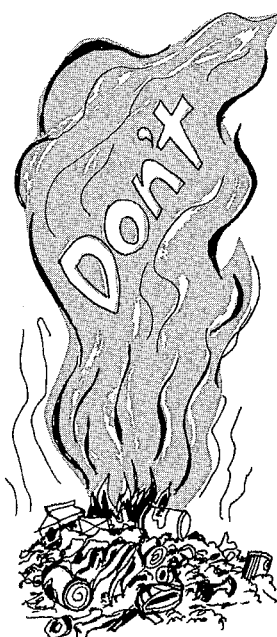
Maintain a well functioning muffler system. It will cut down on air and noise pollution.

Burn un-leaded or low-lead gasoline, which contain fewer toxic lead contaminants.

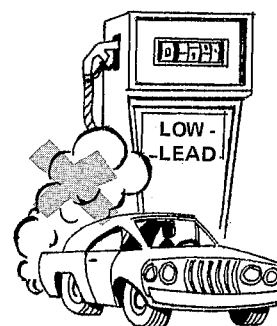
Avoid idling for long periods of time in traffic or while parked at the curb. Engines running at low speeds emit more pollutants. It also costs you money in unproductive fuel.



Check Filters !



USE.....



Use the smallest car possible. Smaller engines pollute less.

Organize car pools. More people riding in fewer cars means less pollution. Use public transportation whenever possible.

Ride bicycles more often—it's healthy and it doesn't pollute.

Have your public library prepare and distribute a list of books on pollution.

Contact your County Extension Agent for a series of 7 fact sheets on "Energy Conservation in the Home."

SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL AND RECYCLING – PAPER, METAL, GLASS

Why Recycle?

The need for recycling becomes apparent, even to the most casual observer, when you realize that the earth's natural resources are limited.

Nature itself constantly proves the wisdom of recycling. A terrarium where plants grow in a semi-closed system is a perfect example. It is self-supporting, requiring no attention because it has no unused waste material. In other words, each link of its complex system supplies a product or by-product to be used by the next link until the cycle is complete.

Only people break the process of recycling. We do so by regarding used goods, materials and by-products as wastes rather than raw materials to be used again in another form or in another system.

Too often, our tendency is to use an item and throw it away. Too often, durability is not a factor, only a convenience. We fail to take into consideration that the number of trees available to make paper can be counted. The tons of iron ore available for making steel can be counted, as can the gallons of oil and cubic feet of natural gas.

A ton of recycled paper represents 17 trees. A ton of recycled aluminum represents many tons of ore that won't have to be taken out of the earth. Recycled glass represents undisturbed silicate deposits, while a ton of steel salvaged from a junk yard represents one less scar on the land caused by a strip mine.

Recycling is a way of living. It requires some changes in attitudes on the part of individual consumers, manufacturers and government. Some of the adjustments will not be easy, but they will certainly be worth the effort.

The "recycling way" is gathering momentum because of the support of active individuals.

What YOU Can Do about Recycling

1. Think about recycling at home and at work. Try to think of secondary uses for bottles, cans and paper.
2. When you purchase goods, think of their durability and recyclability.
3. If you plan to participate in a recycling program, get used to the idea of sorting household wastes into paper, metal, glass and organic categories.
4. Buy large, sturdy bags (lightweight mesh for light shopping and heavier canvas or sailcloth for heavy shopping) and carry them to the market. Have your groceries packed in your bag, not the store's paper bags.
5. If an appliance breaks down and for your use is beyond repair, give it to local Goodwill, Light-house, Salvation Army or similar groups. They may be able to repair it or use parts in other ways.
6. Milk cartons can be re-used by thoroughly cleaning them, then refilling them with water and freezing. The ice can be used in addition to cubes or to keep ice chests cold on picnics and camping trips.
7. Don't pass up thrift stores run by charitable institutions. They offer excellent buys, and keep materials in use and off the junk heaps. Contribute clothing not being worn and miscellaneous items to such firms.

8. Always try to purchase products with as little unnecessary packaging as possible.
9. Use returnable beverage containers instead of throw-away bottles and cans.

Starting a Recycling Program

1. Your first goal should be to enlist the aid of your neighbors and/or community group such as Home Extension Clubs, the local Boy Scout troop, service organizations, etc. It isn't possible to do the whole job yourself.
2. Contact recycling plants and make arrangements for deliveries and/or deposits.
3. Use existing organizational structures to spread the word about the recycling program.
4. Find a suitable location for storing metal, glass or paper until there is a sufficient amount to be trucked to recycling plants.
5. Have your recycling receiving depot open at convenient times on a regular schedule.

6. Get some muscle. Volunteers able to lift heavy loads should man the recycling centers.
7. Set up centers in convenient places—grocery store parking areas and shopping center parking lots are ideal.
8. Find someone, a local contractor or rental agency, willing to donate the use of a truck and driver when materials must be shipped to a recycling plant.
9. As the operation grows, set up satellite centers to operate in smaller geographic areas, making drop-offs more convenient for participating citizens.
10. Publicize your activities. Enlist the aid of local newspapers, radio and TV stations to get your story to everyone in the community.
11. Use any monies derived from the sale of reclaimed materials to further the project and to aid other conservation or anti-pollution programs.

HOW TO ORGANIZE CLEAN-UP GROUPS

Anti-Litter Clean-Up Campaigns

Clean-up campaigns are one of the most effective and satisfying forms of positive environmental action open to concerned individuals and community groups.

The popularity of clean-up campaigns is based on several factors. Most important are the readily apparent and rapid results of clean-ups. They show sharp contrasts between littered landscapes and those that have had the burden of ugly litter removed. They offer participants a strong feeling of accomplishment and provide positive results within a very short time. Finally, clean-up campaigns are open to individuals of all ages, community and civic groups, sportsmen and service clubs—any person or group interested in positive ecological action.

Clean-up campaigns are tailor made for local action. They offer a perfect "first" positive ecological program for concerned groups and individuals providing a basis for future programs. A clean-up devoted to a local park, stream, river, lakeside, or inner city area creates an awareness of the need for being anti-litter conscious. A campaign restores local areas to their natural beauty and also creates the much needed spirit of cooperation necessary for continued positive action programs.

How to Conduct an Anti-Litter Clean-Up Campaign

1. Plan carefully and well in advance. The success of a clean-up campaign depends upon careful attention to details, coordination and planning.
2. Don't try to do it all yourself. Get help from other clubs or organizations. Appoint a working committee to aid in setting the project up.
3. Select a competent chairman to be responsible for coordinating the activities of committee members.
4. Consult with national experts on clean-up campaigns. There are two extremely cooperative agencies—the Department of the Interior's Johnny Horizon Program (Department of Interior, Land Management, Washington, D. C. 20240) and Keep America Beautiful, Inc. (99 Park Avenue, New York, New York 10016). Both will offer suggestions and sell you litter bags, shoulder patches, banners, etc., at cost.

5. Local merchants are usually willing to lend a hand in worthwhile projects. Some of the services you should inquire about are:
 - a. trucking or hauling
 - b. transportation—volunteer drivers of private cars, a charter bus company
 - c. refreshments—a local bakery, dairy, or soft drink bottling company
 - d. photography—to process snapshots for later use in scrapbooks, exhibits or displays
 - e. portable sanitary facilities—local construction company
 - f. printed materials—local print shop
 - g. two-way communications—radio shop or department store
 - h. on-site headquarters—mobile home or camper dealer
6. When selecting a site, the following questions are the most important considerations:
 - a. Is it readily accessible? Remember, you're asking people to donate their time. Have them spend that time ecologically, not driving to the clean-up site.
 - b. Will you be able to get permission to conduct a clean-up on the property? Equally important, will those responsible for the land cooperate with you?
 - c. Is the tract of land big enough to support the number of workers you expect to turn out?
 - d. Finally, is it littered sufficiently to keep your workers busy for the better part of a day? The results of the day's work should be mountains of trash, providing the feeling of accomplishment necessary. Remember, the more litter that is collected, the greater the immediate impact providing a solid foundation for future programs.
7. Selecting a date:
 - a. Select a date when you can expect the best chance of moderate weather.
 - b. Choose a "rain date" and be very precise about what conditions will cause the "rain date" to be put into effect.
 - c. Day of the week is important. Usually a weekend is best. The weekends after holidays, such as Memorial Day, Independence Day and Labor Day, provide the greatest illustrations of littering due to increased use.
8. Prior to Clean-Up Day.
 - a. Complete plans for disposing of trash. What is to be done with it?
 - b. Set up a telephone number where individuals can call for information on the project. Install a telephone answering device if needed.
 - c. Outline the selected site and produce maps showing how to reach it. Be certain to pinpoint any potentially dangerous areas on the site such as blind curves, deep holes in roads, deep ravines and the like.
 - d. Publicize your project through local newspapers, radio and TV stations; flyers posted in grocery stores, laundromats and service stations. Keep the media informed of all important details including site location, dates and times, as well as participating groups, important local personalities, and contributing merchants. Address your correspondence to "News Editor" and remember to be concise and clear. Provide a telephone number and address where you can be reached.
9. On clean-up day:
 - a. Set up a headquarters and sign in all volunteers. They should be assigned to a working unit under the leadership of a team captain.
 - b. Be certain that each individual carries a map of the area illustrating the section he will be working in and the best routes out of the area, if necessary.
 - c. Issue collection containers such as sturdy fine mesh bags or letter bags.
 - d. Take pictures of the results for your own record.
 - e. Set a time limit for the day. Insist that each volunteer sign out at the headquarters table upon completing his or her work.
10. Follow-Up:
 - a. Send thank you's to volunteers and participating merchants.
 - b. Begin plans to keep the movement going with continuing programs for smaller areas, the locating of attractive litter collection recepticals in strategic areas, distribution of anti-litter literature and litter bags.

HOW TO WORK THROUGH YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS IN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Elected officials and representatives are a most important avenue for bringing about positive ecological legislative action.

Their votes should always be cast in light of opinions expressed by the voters they represent. Too often, however, voters fail to express opinions, leaving legislators a free hand. Individuals often react only after unpopular legislation has been passed or after appropriations are made. These are negative reactions and sometimes fall on deaf ears.

To effectively work through elected representatives, concerned individuals and community action groups should keep themselves fully informed about pending legislation and make their views known to their representatives. The most effective and successful electorate-representative relationship is one in which communication flows both ways.

Working Effectively With Elected Officials

1. Vote.
2. Get to know elected officials. Feel free to express your opinions and ask for their positions on ecological subjects.
3. Keep records of positions taken by elected officials to guide you as a voter when they come up for re-election.
4. Be a doer—get involved in local politics. Support candidates with positive ecological platforms.
5. Take part in local government meetings and public hearings. Don't be afraid to stand up and make your views known to elected officials—they are working for you!
6. If you have expertise in ecological, environmental or conservation areas lend your voice to those who support positive action in those areas.
7. If you can't personally see elected officials, write them. Make it brief and to the point. Be courteous and avoid being antagonistic.
8. Keep copies of all letters written and received. You will see patterns emerging in the way individual officials react to your letters or telegrams.
9. Try to create environmental-ecological blocks of votes and use them to support candidates who have exhibited a willingness to support positive action programs.
10. Know how local political bodies function and what procedures are necessary to present an argument before such bodies. Present your arguments and positions early. The last day of legislative session will be of little value to you.
11. Don't contact your elected officials on frivolous or unimportant matters—write or call when it counts.
12. Set up a procedure for contacting officials on important issues. It will change for different locations but the following may serve as an example:
 - a. Determine what channels you must go through to reach an office.
 - b. Write a letter explaining your position and send it via registered mail. Ask for a personal interview when necessary.
 - c. Allow a reasonable amount of time for an answer. If none is forthcoming send a second registered letter with a copy to your local news media.
 - d. If the official indicates a willingness to hear your position, be prepared when you make your presentation. Gather as much positive evidence as possible and enlist the aid of local experts for the presentation.
 - e. When you make your presentation remember you are trying to convince an official that your position is that of the people he represents and the one which will benefit them the most.
 - f. If your official is convinced, he will carry the ball from that point. However, you should assist him in every way possible.
 - g. If you are turned down seek out another official or work to present your position to the entire political body—the board of councilmen, board of supervisors, state legislature and the proper commissions or committees at the local, state and national levels.

- h. Seek the active and passive support of other groups within the community and on a national basis. Some national organizations can and have entered into local situations on behalf of concerned individuals or positive action groups.
- i. When you find an elected representative who supports ecologically sound legislation and other positive actions, support him or her fully.

BECOME THE ECOLOGY ACTION LEADER IN YOUR OWN COMMUNITY

If you are aware of the need for ecology action leaders, you have already taken the first step toward becoming one. The next and most important step is becoming actively concerned.

It demands many things of an individual, including patience, resiliency and the ability to accept defeat and victory in the battle for the environment. Moreover, to become an effective ecology action leader you must devote yourself to the issues—take time to learn everything possible about them, and their relationship to people and the methods of correcting ecological imbalances. And finally: act positively. There is no place in the world of ecology for negativism. Only positive thinking and positive action can accomplish the monumental task of being an ecology action leader.

You may ask, "What must I do to become the ecology action leader in my community?" The following does not pretend to be the answer, it only points to a place from which to start, a place where you as an individual can begin to take those first all-important steps toward restoring and maintaining the balance of people's relationship to the rest of nature.

1. Read this guide again. Decide which areas are the most meaningful to you and your community. Select an area and get to work.
2. Read and ask questions. The more ecological knowledge you have the better prepared you will be for the jobs ahead.
3. When you take up an ecological cause, be certain that you can be identified with it and its goals. Even those programs that are not popular with all segments of your community need leaders who are willing to stand up and be counted.
4. Learn the laws of your community, as well as state and Federal statutes. You will find this knowledge of the law exciting and among the most valuable tools you have for ecological action programs.
5. If you plan to be the ecology action leader of your community, you must lead the way by doing.
 - a. Join or organize positive action groups locally, as well as those with state and national capabilities.
 - b. Offer and donate your time, experience, know-how, business facility and, if possible, financial assistance to positive action programs.
 - c. Take a positive approach to ecology. What has been done is important but not nearly as important as what will be done tomorrow.
 - d. Strive to create an awareness of ecology in everyone. Start at home and branch out.
 - e. Be fair, be accurate, be strong.

The ecology crisis won't be alleviated overnight. You and others with the perseverance and the foresight to become positive thinking ecology action leaders will be in the forefront curing present ecological ills and preventing recurrences in the future.



ECOLOGY AND ENERGY CONSERVATION

For further information, write the following organizations:

Water Pollution Control Federation
3900 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20016

Air Pollution Control Ass'n
4400 Fifth Ave.
Pittsburgh, Pa. 15213

Citizens for Clean Air
502 Park Avenue
New York, N. Y. 10022

The Aluminum Association
750 Third Avenue
New York, N. Y. 10017

American Paper Institute
260 Madison Avenue
New York, N. Y. 10016

Glass Container Manufacturers Institute
Public Affairs Dept.
330 Madison Avenue
New York, N. Y. 10017

Environmental Protection Agency
1129 20th Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20013

Citizens Committee on Natural Resources
1346 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20036

The Nature Conservancy
1522 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

Naitonal Wildlife Federation
1412 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

Keep America Beautiful, Inc.
99 Park Avenue,
New York, N.Y. 10016

Dept. of Interior, Land Management
Johnny Horizon Program
Washington, D.C. 20240

Conservation Education Association
c/o Dr. W. F. Clark
Eastern Montana College
Billings, Mont. 59101

Sierra Club
1050 Mills Tower
220 Bush Street
San Francisco, Ca. 94104

American Association of University Women
2401 Virginia Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20037

League of Women Voters of U.S.
1730 M St. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

National Geographic Society
1145 17th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

Supt. of Documents
Government Printing Office
Washington, D.C. 20402
(ask for "Ecology" catalog)

In Nebraska

Dept. of Environmental Control
Box 94653
State House Station
Lincoln, Neb. 68509

Your County Extension Office:
"Energy Conservation in the
Home" series of 7 fact sheets

The Cooperative Extension Service provides information and educational programs to all people without regard to race, color or national origin.