

(4/23/25 – District Administrator’s Corner Article)

This week students throughout the United States celebrate Earth Day in various ways. The political birth of this celebration has some local interest.

In 1969, a junior senator from Wisconsin, Gaylord Nelson, had long been concerned about the deteriorating environment in the United States. And in January 1969, he and citizens across our nation witnessed a massive oil spill in California. Inspired by other student movements, Senator Nelson wanted to harness the voices of students with an emerging public consciousness about air and water pollution.

The work started on college campuses. Senator Nelson announced the idea for a teach-in to the national media, and persuaded Pete McCloskey, a conservation-minded Congressman, to serve as his co-chair. There was immediate recognition of their success and soon activities and support across the country grew. They changed the name to Earth Day, which immediately sparked national media attention, and caught additional notoriety across the country. Earth Day inspired 20 million Americans—at the time, 10% of the total population of the United States—to take to the streets, parks and auditoriums to demonstrate against the impacts of 150 years of poorly guided industrial development which had left a growing legacy of serious human health impacts.

Earth Day in 1980, held in Washington, D.C. across from the White House, capped a decade of substantial US environmental legislation, including the Endangered Species Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, Toxics Substances Control Act, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, and of course the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act. It also ignited the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency and the banning of DDT and of lead in gasoline.

On the River Valley campus this week, students will embrace the incredible natural beauty and bounty that the district retains. The lower Wisconsin riverway is one of the best features of our great state and our River Valley School District is proud to teach about ecology by fostering an understanding of how organisms interact with their environment, encouraging hands-on learning, and connecting ecological concepts to real-world issues and local communities.

Sincerely,

Loren Glasbrenner, District Administrator
River Valley School District