

The New York Times

This week, several of my Legal Planet colleagues and I have been posting and musing about Earth Days past, present and future. As I write this, Earth Day 50 is winding down after a multitude of (largely online) demonstrations and celebrations across the globe.

One long-term, disturbing development over the past couple of decades has been the steady decline of journalistic resources dedicated to environmental news and policy. Back in the halcyon days of environmental journalism, most of the nation's major newspapers and broadcast networks assigned journalists with considerable environmental training and expertise to the environmental and natural resources news beats. But over the last two decades that situation has changed dramatically, and for the worse. Today, it's only the rare newspaper or network that has the funding and commitment to employ skilled reporters who have the luxury of specializing in environmental investigations, reporting and analysis.

So it's important to recognize those increasingly-rare news outlets that buck this desultory trend and keep a media microscope on environmental law and policy. With that in mind, kudos to what is perhaps the best example of these journalistic outliers: the New York Times. In successive, detailed stories yesterday and today, the Times has published lengthy accounts of Earth Day(s) past, present and future. Yesterday the Times' environmental reporting occupied almost all of the paper's weekly Science Times section, with a multitude of fascinating Earth Day-related articles. One was [a lengthy profile of Denis Hayes](#), one of the key organizers of the first Earth Day 50 years ago who's also been involved in the annual celebrations consistently over the subsequent half-century. And seven (count `em, seven) other Times environmental reporters published separate, fascinating articles under the umbrella headline, "[A Crash Course on Climate Change, 50 Years After the First Earth Day.](#)"



Today, Times editors dedicated seven full pages of its main section to another marvelous collection of Earth Day-themed stories. One engaging set of articles, collectively titled [“What’s Better, What’s Worse,”](#) describes numerous environmental developments that have demonstrably trended up since the first Earth Day in 1970, along with an equal number of environmental trends that have gone south over the past 50 years. And, for those readers like me who are hooked on environmental history, the Times today republished its contemporaneous 1970 news accounts of the first Earth Day [here](#) and [here](#).

Kudos to the “Gray Lady” for contributing to today’s Earth Day celebrations in such a comprehensive, informative and entertaining fashion. And sincere thanks to the Times for its ongoing, critically-important role in keeping lit the flickering flame of environmental journalism.