

Earth Day Heroes:

Why is Protecting the Environment Important to You? – ANR Staff Share Their Inspiration



Since 1972, people all over the world have been celebrating Earth Day. At the ANR, we're celebrating too! Every staff member at the Agency of Natural Resources works to uphold the same organizational mission: to protect, sustain and enhance Vermont's natural resources for the benefit of this and future generations. At the same time, each of us individually have had experiences and learned lessons that have led us to the work that we do. Many people with varied beliefs and ideas, all working toward a shared goal—that is the landscape of environmental protection and management at the ANR - and across Vermont. In honor of Earth Day, we wanted to share some of the reasons that we are inspired to care for the environment:

"I like living creatures: fish and frogs and turtles and people. The beauty, complexity and interconnected harmonies of natural systems delight me and fill me with awe. I don't think that I am unique in this way; I think that anyone who pauses to reflect on nature can feel this connection. And yet, in our busy lives we often forget about those things that sustain us and give our lives meaning. The work I do to protect the environment has two primary motivations: first, to do what I can to improve the relationship between people and the natural world; and second, to act here and now in this messy intersection of science, economics, politics and competing values so that we can do the least harm and the most good for fish, frogs, turtles and people." - **Eric Palmer, F&W Administration**

"Protecting the environment is important to me, because I want my children to live on a healthy planet and appreciate the Earth as a shared resource. It's a tall order - but I believe in what I come to work every day to do, and I am uplifted and empowered by the passionate people around me." - **Jenna Calvi, Environmental Analyst, Stormwater Program, DEC**

"Because a good planet is hard to find." - **Chris Olson, Addison County Forester, FPR**

"The earth is a living organism; treat it like family." - **Sheila Remick Lilley - Financial Administrator, ANR**

"The environment sustains us and all life. I work to protect it for selfish and un-selfish reasons alike, including a belief that nature has intrinsic value." - **Josh Kelly, Environmental Analyst, Waste Management & Prevention, DEC**

"What a wonderful world. Why squander it?" - **Jodi Shippee, Vermont Natural Heritage Inventory, F&W**

"Protecting the environment is important so that our resources will be available for future generations to enjoy." – **Nicole Corrao, Information and Education Specialist, Hunter Education, F&W**

"Because I like being able to breathe without getting sick." – **Siobhan Perricone, Systems Developer, Information Technology Division, ANR**

"Protecting the environment is important for so many reasons, but the ones that stand out to me the most are preserving the land, flora and fauna for future generations as well as opposing the often well-funded interests that threaten our environment. Whether it is fining bad actors, or in my case, funding projects that will abate pollution, many of us here at the Agency of Natural Resources take pride in our daily duties serving to protect the state we and so many others care dearly about. Making sure our children and their children get to breath clean air, drink clean water, and have access to productive ecosystems is vital to me and my colleagues. I love that my means to financially support myself also benefits the environment and that is an intangible part of why I enjoy working for the Vermont Dept. of Environmental Conservation." – **John DosSantos, Financial Administrator, Facilities Engineering Division, DEC**

"Protecting the environment is important to me so that I can share the natural world around me with those I love and help to conserve our plants, animals, and habitat for many future generations of Vermonters to enjoy." – **Alyssa Bennett, Small Mammals Biologist, F&W**

"We aren't separate from our environment, we are part of it. We have a responsibility to be stewards, given how big our footprint is as a species. And protecting wetlands is a pretty big bang for your buck. Want clean water? Want wildlife? Want flood resiliency? Protect wetlands!" – **Shannon Morrison, District Wetlands Ecologist, DEC**

"We are connected to the environment; how we treat the environment mirrors how the environment will treat our next generations." – **Debra Bordo, Environmental Engineer, Waste Management & Prevention Division, DEC**

"I grew up as a member of a large family and we raised 90-95% of what we ate and nothing was wasted. My parents taught me at an early age to take care of the earth and it will provide what you need. We didn't use fertilizers or other additives to grow our fruits and vegetables and they grew just fine. We were selective in the wood that was cut to heat our home and lumber to provide money for what we couldn't grow. I participated in Green Up Days with my children to teach them of the importance of not "trashing" our environment and they have shared with their children. There were many lessons that I learned growing up that I didn't ask why as Mom and Dad gave the messages, but working at the DEC has educated me on the whys and taught me so much more! I have learned that everything is interconnected and if

one area is destroyed or damaged it will have impacts on others. Environmental resources are not unlimited and if not treated with respect and given the protection they need, they will disappear as well as the elements that we need to survive.” – **Linda Riddell, Executive Assistant, DEC Commissioner’s Office**

“The unregulated economic development of the past, left the present generations with a legacy of environmental issues, affecting both the economy and health of the community. Working in environmental protection today builds possibilities for a sustainable community in the future.” – **Hugo Martinez Cazon, Waste Management and Prevention Division, DEC**

“Because the reality of a world without clean water, clean air, and the amazing diversity of life we have on this planet is too awful to contemplate. Humans need individuals to envision how we can live as part of the natural processes that sustain us, lead the way, and drag along the reluctant.” – **Angela Shambaugh, Aquatic Biologist, Watershed Mgmt. Division, DEC**

“Human pursuit for quality of life may soon result in stark difficulties and effects in regard to the quantity and diversity of life as the Holocene extinction continues into the 21st century. It is important to me to be acting as an individual and as a member of a global society to foster conditions that maximize quality of life and the potential for sustainability of life. It is imperative to fully recognize the miracle and beauty of Earth’s ecosystems and life forms, and to solve one of humanity’s greatest problems – habitat preservation. As stewards of the Earth it is our responsibility to protect the natural environment to minimize the natural and anthropogenic sources of acute and accumulative toxins (and chemicals leading to climate perturbation) that lead to detrimental health effects. Our descendants deserve our concerted effort to maintain an environment to flourish in as enjoyed by us and our ancestors.” – **Dan Nielsen, Environmental Scientist, DEC**

“I grew up hunting and fishing and appreciating the outdoors in the State of Vermont with my family. I cherish those memories. I work to protect fish and wildlife and this heritage so that my daughter and all children like her can have the opportunity to have those same experiences.” – **Robert Sterling, VT State Game Warden Law Enforcement Division, F&W**

“Biologically speaking, all living things are related – we all evolved from the same early life forms. Practically speaking – we are all dependent on each other and on functioning natural systems to live. Protecting the environment is important to me because we’re all a part of it, and we’re all a part of each other too – birds, trees, bugs, mountain lions, salamanders and human beings – we’re all connected in countless ways, and we all need each other to stay healthy and so that our children inherit a healthy world. I care because I love the natural world and am grateful for everything it provides.” – **Leila LaRosa, Outreach Coordinator, ANR**

“I’m really proud to be an eighth generation woodchuck. I’m hoping, in just a small way, to conserve some of Vermont’s natural heritage; both to give back to my ancestors, and to leave at least a piece of the Vermont I knew to my children and my grandchildren.” – **Doug Blodgett, F&W**

“It’s not too late yet. Native people of this land had the answer and they knew that we needed to look today toward the 7th generation to be sustainable on this planet. They were right.” – **Tom Cady, State Parks Division, FPR**

“The environment is not just important to me in a romantic-aesthetic, “greenie-weenie” sort of way, but also in a practical, “this-is-our-foundation-can’t-live-without-it” sort of way. Protecting the environment is not a luxury but a series of practical choices that ensures that me, my family, my community and future generations have productive soil, clean water, healthy forests with all the critical diversity within it to both enjoy and depend on today, and into the future.” – **Keith Thompson, Chittenden County Forester, FPR**

“To me “environment” is nature and the role of humans in it. I feel blessed and cursed with awareness – of people, of nature and of how we act to damage or protect our planet and the life we are a part of. The Earth is going through incredible losses of biodiversity right now; during my lifetime. I choose to live with love, honor, beauty and respect.” – **Ned Swanberg, Mapping & Planning, Vermont Rivers Program, Watershed Management Division, DEC**

“I work to protect the environment because my wife and I are having our first child in a couple of months and I want them to grow up in a world in which they can find something as amazing as a spotted salamander right in their own backyard.” – **Tom Rodgers, Outreach, F&W**

“Because it shows respect and appreciation to the One who created it all, and to future generations.” – **Jud Kratzer, Fisheries Biologist, F&W**

“This habitat we call Earth generously provides all the basic building blocks that we need to survive (clean air and water, raw materials for shelter, etc.). It also supports all the experiences, people and other things that make our lives worthwhile. An unpolluted and ecologically-intact environment is the key to the basic survival and well-being of all species. Protecting something so precious should be nothing short of a core responsibility for a species that named itself Homo sapiens (“wise man”).” – **Jeff Merrell, Environmental Analyst, Air Quality & Climate Division, DEC**

“Clean, safe drinking water is essential – period.” – **Heather Campbell, Blue-Green Algae Coordinator, Drinking Water & Groundwater Protection Division, DEC**

“As a high school student growing up in New Jersey, I had the opportunity to explore chemicals in the environment – and I was hooked. How could one NOT become both concerned about and dedicated to helping create a preferred

future; one which included a respect for the environment. That we, as co-habitants of a planet with limited natural resources and limited waste sinks, mine became a passion for “becoming the change I wished to see in the world,” and encourages others to think ecologically, and to live more sustainably.” – **Doug Kievit-Kylar, Compliance Analyst, Drinking Water & Groundwater Protection Division, DEC**

“My answer is an easy one. I have children and a new grandchild, along with an appreciation of geologic time, environmental change, and extinction.” – **Marjorie Gale, Environmental Scientist/Geologist, Geology Division**

“We as individuals exist on this planet but for the blink of an eye. As a species we can be one of the most fragile in existence, requiring modification to the environment including construction and protection to exist. We have enormous power both mental and physical to bring about that change, but we are repeatedly awed by the ability of the earth to exert forces which will sweep those changes aside, reminding us that no matter how hard we try, our existence as we know it can be and likely will be fleeting in the grand scheme of things. Protecting the environment is protecting our ability to continue a productive and healthy existence on this planet. We owe it to the generations who come after.

Our existence will continue to require interaction and modification to the physical world around us, we must find and maintain a balance that allows that existence to continue, but in a manner that is within the capacity of our world to accept and recover. We have inherited a situation that will require more than our lifetimes to correct, which makes preparing the next generation that much more important. I believe that the next generation must be connected with the natural world in order to understand and appreciate that the resources we need in which to live are not necessarily infinite, but then again not necessarily finite if we recognize the need to steward their use and renewal.

I believe the natural world is not something to be set aside and placed out of touch. Humans are on this earth and must learn how to interact with their environment in a sustainable manner. That also means inviting them into it - even if that means impacting it. Without exposure there is no understanding; without understanding there is less appreciation; without appreciation there will be little will for protection. Protecting the environment is important, for humankind.” – **Frank Spaulding, State Parks Division, FPR**