

Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly

MEMORANDUM

TO: Kelly Cooper, Assembly President
Members, Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly

FROM: Brent Johnson, Assembly Member (B) for Brent Johnson
Willy Dunne, Assembly Member (B) for Willy Dunne

SUBJECT: Resolution 2020-018 Promoting the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day
(Johnson, Dunne)

On April 22, 1970, twenty million Americans — 10% of that year's population of the United States — took to the streets, parks and auditoriums to demonstrate for a healthy, sustainable environment in massive coast-to-coast rallies. Senator Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin came up with the idea for Earth Day as a means for Americans to express concern about environmental problems and the plight of animals being driven to extinction by human activity. Several events led to the first Earth Day.

Rachel Carson's 1962 book, *Silent Spring*, documented adverse environmental effects caused by the indiscriminate use of pesticides, alerting the public to this issue. The Cuyahoga River, which runs through Cleveland into Lake Erie, caught fire in 1969 — for the 10th time! Also in 1969, an offshore oil drilling operation experienced a blow-out, which led to oil washing ashore on the beaches of Santa Barbara, California. This was the largest oil spill in U.S. history, until later accidents eclipsed it.

President Nixon responded to these crises by enacting the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in January 1970. The first Earth Day displayed public sentiment, which was alarmed by destruction and danger to Mother Nature. In July 1970 President Nixon reorganized several federal agencies to create the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Environmental acts, agencies and government oversight rules brought change and reversed some pollution problems.

In 1990 Earth Day went global, mobilizing 200 million people in 141 countries and lifting environmental issues onto the world stage. Earth Day 1990 gave a huge boost to recycling efforts worldwide and helped pave the way for the 1992 United Nations Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It also prompted President Bill Clinton to award Senator Gaylord Nelson the Presidential Medal of Freedom —

the highest honor given to civilians in the United States — for his role as Earth Day founder.

World leaders from 175 countries signed the Paris climate accord on Earth Day, 2016. The struggle to preserve nature on Planet Earth continues. Earth Day is a grass roots effort of 50-years duration. Supporting this resolution will increase public awareness of environmental issues, which are as important today as they were 50 years ago. Climate Action is specifically named as a theme of the 2020 Earth Day celebration.

Your consideration of this resolution is appreciated.