

## Article: History of the Environmental Movement

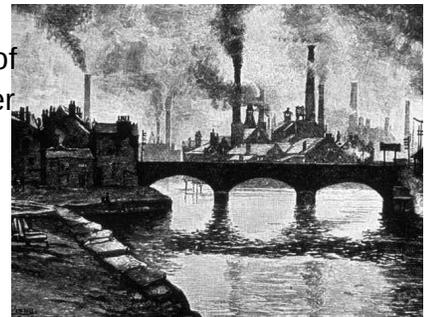
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Environmental

Environmentalism is a broad philosophy and social movement which is concerned about environmental conservation and the improvement of the state of the environment. As a social movement it seeks to influence the political process by lobbying, activism, and education in order to protect natural resources and ecosystems. An environmentalist is a person who may speak out about our natural environment and the sustainable management of its resources through changes in public policy or individual behavior by supporting healthy Earth practices.

Throughout human's early history concern for environmental protection has occurred in different parts of the world at different times. In the Middle East some of the earliest known writings that were concerned with environmental pollution were created by Arabic medical workers who were concerned with air contamination, water contamination, soil contamination, and solid waste mishandling. In Europe during the early days (1272) King Edward I banned the burning of sea-coal after its smoke had become a problem. The issue of air pollution would continue to be a problem in England and is still viewed as one today.

The most influential rise to the modern environmental movement was the Industrial Revolution which occurred during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. During this time there was a great development of factories and in turn an immense increase in the consumption of coal and other fossil fuels. Along with this development came a number of other issues such as deforestation, urban expansion, and the use of chemicals; all of which have led to the environmental problems of pollution, resource depletion and the loss of biodiversity.



Prior to the 1960s and 1970s these problems attracted very little attention from the public, media and governments except for some organizations which had been operating since the 19<sup>th</sup> century that primarily looked at the conservation of wildlife and wilderness. It has not been until the last 40 years that a rapid growth in the environmental movement has taken place with the rise of "pressure" groups (such as Greenpeace) which began to form a response to the growing environmental problems. This period marks the birth of modern "environmentalism".



Much of the initial pressure from organizations confronted polluters and brought about education regarding the modern life and the issues that come from it. In 1970 the world held its first "Earth Day" (April 22<sup>nd</sup>) which again focused on demonstrations against pollution. Shortly after, the United Nations' *Conference on the Human Environment* was held in Stockholm, and produced a declaration of principles designed to deal with specific environmental problems.

Since the beginning of the modern environmental movement much has been learned about the environment, and the focus of environmental groups has slowly shifted from local issues to wider, national and global issues. During this time of broadening the focus, the world's population has almost doubled, and rates of energy consumption and resource depletion have become increasing alarming to cater for the higher standards of living demanded by society. The new awareness of environmental issues brought about by the Environmental Movement has modified many traditional attitudes such as the idea that Earth's resources are not limitless and are being mismanaged.

Like with any belief there are critics to the beliefs and ideas of the environmental movement. Criticism of environmentalism falls into two major categories: environmental skepticism and anti-environmentalism. Environmental skeptics dispute the claims of environmentalists, claiming they are either inaccurate or exaggerated. They are often, though not always, linked to organizations with commercial interests in continuing to exploit the planet's resources. Anti-environmentalists, on the other hand, accept many of the claims made by environmentalists while at the same time accept that change is inevitable, regardless of the cause and speed. They do not deny the impact of humanity, but rather disagree with the argument that humanity can kill the planet, stating instead that earth's several billion year history is evidence that Earth is a lot more resilient than many environmentalists give it credit for.

### Works Cited

1. Encyclopedia of Sustainable Development. *Environmental Movement*. Online <http://www.ace.mmu.ac.uk>
2. Wikipedia. *Environmentalism*. Online <http://en.wikipedia.org>

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1. Encyclopedia of Sustainable Development. *Environmental Movement*. Online <http://www.ace.mmu.ac.uk>
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