

Celebrating Local Environmental Wins

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We are back! We hope all of you had a wonderful start to spring and a meaningful Earth Month. While we took a short break from the newsletter, we spent time in our communities participating in initiatives, connecting with nature, and reflecting on the many ways people are working to create positive environmental change.

Earth Month reminds us that there are countless ways to give back to our planet and support the communities and ecosystems around us. Although environmental challenges can feel overwhelming, there are also many reasons for hope. Communities around the world are finding creative ways to restore ecosystems, reduce waste, and protect natural spaces.

Let's celebrate these local wins.

Let's reflect.

Let's learn.

By highlighting stories of restoration, conservation, and community action, we can remind ourselves that positive environmental change is already happening all around us.

Win #1: Community Action

Milwaukee Riverkeeper Sets World Record for Largest River Cleanup

On Earth Day 2026, nearly 5,000 volunteers came together across 124 cleanup sites along the Milwaukee River Basin for [Milwaukee Riverkeeper's](#) annual river cleanup, setting a new Guinness World Record. In partnership with eco-friendly cleaning company Tru Earth, volunteers worked together to remove more than 110,000 pounds of waste from local waterways.

This effort required extensive coordination, dedication, and a shared commitment to protecting the health of the community and surrounding ecosystem.

Projects like this demonstrate the power of collective action and show how thousands of small individual efforts can come together to create meaningful environmental impact.



Read more about this incredible restoration story here:

<https://shepherdexpress.com/news/community-news/milwaukee-riverkeeper-sets-world-record-for-largest-river-cleanup/>

Win #2: Wildlife Recovery

Giant Tortoises Return to Floreana Island, Galapagos

For the first time in more than 180 years, giant tortoises are once again roaming Floreana Island in the Galápagos. In February 2026, 158 juvenile tortoises were released back into their ancestral habitat as part of a long-term ecological restoration effort.

Floreana Island is home to a small community of roughly 160 residents who have played an important role in supporting the [Floreana Ecological Restoration Project](#). Through a shared

vision of conservation and ecosystem recovery, the project has focused on restoring balance to the island's fragile environment.

Reintroducing these native tortoises helps promote native plant growth, disperse seeds, and create conditions that allow entire ecosystems to function more naturally. The return of these tortoises represents more than the recovery of a species. It is a reminder that ecosystems can begin to heal when restoration efforts are sustained over time and supported by local communities.

Read more about this incredible restoration story here:

<https://www.islandconservation.org/floreana-tortoise-release/>



Win #3: Urban Rewilding

Community Creates a Pocket Forest in Massachusetts

In Attleboro, Massachusetts, community members and local high school students joined the [Ocean River Institute](#) to transform an unused 2,000-square-foot baseball field into a thriving mini forest. Over two days, more than 150 volunteers planted 550 native trees and shrubs to help reduce flooding, improve biodiversity, and create habitat for local wildlife.



In recent years, Attleboro has struggled with both flooding and drought conditions. By planting a diverse mix of native species, the community created a landscape better equipped to absorb and retain water while supporting local ecosystems.

Beyond the environmental benefits, projects like this also strengthen community connection and environmental stewardship. Involving students in hands-on restoration work helps build a deeper understanding of local environmental challenges and reminds younger generations that they can play an active role in protecting the places they call home.

Projects like this show how even small plots of land can become powerful tools for climate resilience, ecological recovery, and community engagement.

Read more about this incredible restoration story here:

<https://www.wbur.org/cognoscenti/2026/05/21/pocket-forest-miyawaki-method-climate-change-resilience-ecosystem-rob-moir>

Win #4: Community Stewardship

Community Volunteers Help Clean Michigan's Roadsides

Every year, volunteers collect more than 40,000 bags of trash from Michigan's roadsides. In partnership with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), organizations commit to adopt a minimum of 2-miles for a minimum of 2-years on both sides of a state highway 3-times each year. Following strict safety guidelines, volunteers wear MDOT provided safety vests and pick-up trash that has accumulated along the roadsides. There are currently 2,900 groups participating in the program cleaning-up 6,000 miles of highways in Michigan.

This year, one of our board members volunteered to pick-up trash along I-96 with the Sierra Club Crossroads Group on one of their spring clean-up days.

"I am really glad I stepped out of my comfort zone to participate. It was a beautiful morning, noisy with all the cars and trucks, there were so very many cigarette butts and insulation, it was a fabulous group of people, and I was really glad I made the time to help!"



Read more about this ongoing effort here: <https://www.michigan.gov/mdot/programs/highway-programs/roadside-property-management/adopt-a-highway>

Why These Wins Matter

Nature is resilient.

Communities are powerful.

Environmental progress is happening.

While these stories come from different communities and ecosystems, they all share something important in common: people decided to act. Whether it was restoring habitat for giant tortoises, planting a pocket forest, cleaning a river, or picking up litter along a highway, each project began with individuals choosing to invest their time and energy into improving the places they care about.

These wins remind us that environmental progress is not limited to major policy changes or international agreements. It happens when communities come together, take ownership of local challenges, and commit to creating a healthier future.

What is especially inspiring is that these efforts do not end with a single event. They create momentum, bringing communities together around restoration, conservation, and long-term stewardship.

Positive environmental stories may not always make headlines, but they matter deeply. They remind us that progress is possible and that ordinary people can play a meaningful role in creating change. Environmental action is happening every day in neighborhoods, rivers, parks, schools, and communities around the world.

The importance of these local success stories is increasingly being recognized. This year during [NPR Climate Solutions Week](#), the theme was on "Local Lessons," highlighting inspiring environmental solutions and community-driven efforts from across the United States. If you're looking for more environmental wins, we encourage you to listen to or read some of these stories and discover how people are creating positive change. Discover how people are making a difference in their own backyards.

Celebrating these wins helps combat hopelessness and inspires more people to get involved in protecting the places they care about.

Actions to Take in Your Life

At Wading In, we're all about meeting you where you are and providing actionable solutions that fit into your life. Check out our recommendations below related to amplifying your individual actions, choose the ones that work for you, and start today!

 **Earth Friend** - Easy adjustments that require minor changes.

- Connect with local organizations, learn about what projects they are working on.
- Join a cleanup, tree planting, habitat restoration, or other community event.

- Follow a local environmental organization on social media and celebrate their successes by sharing a positive story with friends or family.
- Visit a restored natural area, community garden, or local conservation project to see environmental progress firsthand.

 Green Defender - More intensive swaps and adjustments that require greater effort.

- Volunteer at an organization that aligns with your passions and interests.
- Support local conservation efforts through donations, fundraising, or volunteer leadership.
- Participate in a citizen science project by helping collect data on plants, birds, pollinators, water quality, or local wildlife.

 Environmental Warrior - Lifestyle changes which will have a bigger impact.

- Create an environmental campaign and initiate positive change in your community.
- Run for local office or serve on a community advisory board to help shape environmental policies and priorities.
- Consider joining us at [Wading In For Sustainability](#) as a donor, board member or content contributor!
- Mentor others and help grow the next generation of environmental stewards.

Resources:

- <https://milwaukeekeeper.org/>
- <https://shepherdexpress.com/news/community-news/milwaukee-riverkeeper-sets-world-record-for-largest-river-cleanup/>
- <https://www.darwinfoundation.org/en/our-work/land/floreana-ecological-restoration-project/>
- <https://www.islandconservation.org/floreana-tortoise-release/>
- <https://www.oceanriver.org/>
- <https://www.wbur.org/cognoscenti/2026/05/21/pocket-forest-miyawaki-method-climate-change-resilience-ecosystem-rob-moir>
- <https://www.michigan.gov/mdot/programs/highway-programs/roadside-property-management/adopt-a-highway>
- <https://www.npr.org/series/1199537689/climate-week/archive?date=05-31-2026>