



Our Environment, Our Future

The International Service Project
of the Leo Club Program





Leos as stewards of the Earth

Caring for the air, water, and land on Earth is a serious responsibility. As the most intelligent species on the planet, man is responsible for protecting the Earth's flora and fauna.

In 1972, The International Association of Lions Clubs adopted The Policy Statement on the Human Environment. This defined Lions' commitment to preserving and improving the environment.

In 1999, the board of directors of Lions Clubs International approved *The Environment Program as the official international service project of the Leo Club Program*. Like Lions, Leos are now dedicated to helping protect the environment.

As the new millennium begins, technological advances continue to alter the planet. Meanwhile, inhabitants of the Earth need to find ways to preserve nature. The coexistence of technology and nature is known as sustainable development.

The purpose of this handbook is to encourage Leos to become stewards of the Earth. Since Leo clubs exist all over the world, Leos can truly make a difference in caring for the planet. Leos can address the environmental problems that affect their communities. Every effort is needed.

This handbook begins with a brief explanation of environmental issues. Leo clubs that have never attempted an environment project may find this information helpful. Examples of successful Leo environment projects are included in the second section of this handbook.



Shovels in hand, the West Carrollton High School Leos, Ohio, USA, plant trees to help the environment.

Before planning an environment project, Leo clubs should consider asking their Lions district environment chairman for suggestions. On the last page of this handbook, there is a list of environment organizations that can provide Leo clubs with additional information.

Environment projects should implement the principles of stewardship

- *Reduce* - the amount of waste produced.
- *Reuse* - materials instead of discarding them.
- *Recycle* - materials whenever possible.

Environment issues



Chlorofluorocarbons from car air conditioners contribute to the depletion of the ozone layer.

Air pollution

Both natural and manmade elements pollute the air we breathe. In developed countries, sulfur dioxide (from industry and power stations); nitrogen oxides (from power stations, industry, and cars); and carbon monoxides (from cars) pollute the atmosphere. In developing countries, the burning of coal, wood, and charcoal pollute the air.

After rising into the air, these pollutants return to Earth with the next rainfall or snowfall. This “acid rain” damages forests, lakes, buildings, and monuments.

The Earth’s ozone layer protects us from the ultraviolet rays of the sun. When chlorofluorocarbons (found in aerosol propellants from refrigeration units, air conditioners, propellant gas in aerosol sprays, foam Styrofoam, halons used in fire extinguishers, and solvents used in the production of building and packaging foams) are released into the air, they break down the

ozone layer. Without this layer of protection, skin cancer, cataracts, and blindness can occur.

Pollution of the air can affect the Earth’s delicate “greenhouse gases.” The interaction of carbon dioxide and water vapor in the atmosphere keeps the earth’s temperature suitable for life. Altering this balance can result in a rise in atmospheric temperatures. The added heat could melt the polar ice caps causing the oceans to rise. Islands and low inlets could flood. Monsoon seasons could shift. Natural habitats could change.

Industrial accidents are another source of air pollution. When accidents occur at industrial sites or nuclear reactors, chemicals and radioactive particles are released into the air we breathe.

Indoor air pollution is also a concern. In airtight buildings, secondhand cigarette smoke and toxic fumes accumulate and contribute to a health condition known as environmental illness.

Water pollution

Only three percent of the water on Earth is freshwater. Most of this supply (99%) is found under the polar ice caps. Freshwater is used primarily for agriculture, industry, and then, for people.

Forty percent of the world’s population shares freshwater sources. One region may choose to use its freshwater supply for human or industrial wastes. Further downstream, the same waterway may be used for drinking water. Chemical run off from agriculture may also seep into this waterway.



Leos from Cuttack, India, cross polluted waters to deliver supplies to the needy.

Of the 4.4 billion people who live in developing countries, 60% lack basic sanitation and one-third lack safe drinking water.

Clean oceans are also important. More than 3.5 billion people depend on marine life as their primary food source. Coastal cities are home to more than half of humanity. By the year 2020, coastal cities will contain three-quarters of the world's population.

Pollution of the ocean from industry, fertilizers, pesticides, and tourism creates marine blooms of algae known as red tides. These toxic tides deplete oxygen from the water. Marine life needs oxygen to survive.

Oil spills are an accidental source of water pollution. Spills from oil tankers release millions of tons of oil into the oceans. This kills plant and animal life.

Nuclear submarines also contribute to water pollution. Leakage from radioactive isotopes on nuclear submarines (plutonium torpedoes have a half-life of 24,000 years) contaminate the water and marine life.

Land pollution

Man is among the 100 million plants, animals, insects, and microorganisms that share the planet Earth. Scientists estimate that 150 to 200 species of life become extinct every 24 hours. The destruction of natural habitats, hunting, and pollution are among the primary causes of extinction.

To live on Earth, man needs food. Growing food requires nutrient-rich topsoil. In developed countries, farmers rotate their crops and apply pesticides and chemical fertilizers to increase their crop yields. Over time, these poisons can seep into underground water tables.

In developing countries, mineral-rich topsoil is often lost to wind, rain, deforestation, overgrazing of animals, and the lack of crop rotation. When topsoil is lost, crops cannot grow. The 1984-85 drought in Africa forced farmers to abandon their topsoil-deficient fields. In Ethiopia alone, six million people faced starvation.



The SM Ken Hwa Keningau Leos, Malaysia, inspect a field after a slash-and-burn incident.

Mismanagement of forests results in deforestation. Every year, 16.8 million hectares of trees are cut. Often, new trees are not planted to replace the felled trees. The absence of trees affects the absorption of carbon dioxide in the air.

Wetland areas, e.g., swamps, mangroves, shallow water estuaries, and marine areas, are natural water basins. These regions help control flooding. When this seemingly useless land is sold to developers or farmers, the essential water basins are eliminated. Crops planted on former wetlands often fail.

Tourism also affects the environment. As the world's second biggest business (after the oil business), the tourism industry uses land for hotels, restaurants, and access roads. In remote areas, ecosystems may suffer as a result of the conveniences created for tourists.

Millions of acres of land are used to dispose of household, industrial, chemical, and high-level radioactive waste. Unlined landfills have been known to contaminate the land and the groundwater used by plants and animals.

Human environment

In 1990, the human population of the Earth was five billion persons. Every day, 250,000 more babies are born. The United Nations (UN) predicts that the population of the Earth will reach eight billion persons by the year 2025.

Ninety-five percent of the Earth's growth rate is occurring in the southern hemisphere, according to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). In the countries of India, China, and Nigeria, large birth rates are projected to occur between the years 1990 and 2030. In these countries, the fertility rate may supersede the rate of food production.

In Japan, Italy, and Germany, low birth rates are expected to be reported from 1990 to 2030. Developed countries (located mostly in the northern hemisphere) continue to report decreasing fertility rates and increasing life

expectancies. Improved sanitation, health care, medicine, shelter, and nutrition have contributed to the increase in human longevity.

Humans, animals, and plants all rely on the earth's limited resources for survival. Sustaining an ecosystem (a system of plants, animals, and other organisms together with the nonliving components of the environment) requires coexistence. The food chain on Earth depends on the interrelatedness of all flora and fauna.

Balancing technological advancement with the environment is an important 21st century challenge. As leaders in the new millennium, Leos can help protect today's environment and preserve the planet for generations to come.

Man is the source of many of the Earth's environmental ills.

Man can also be a solution.



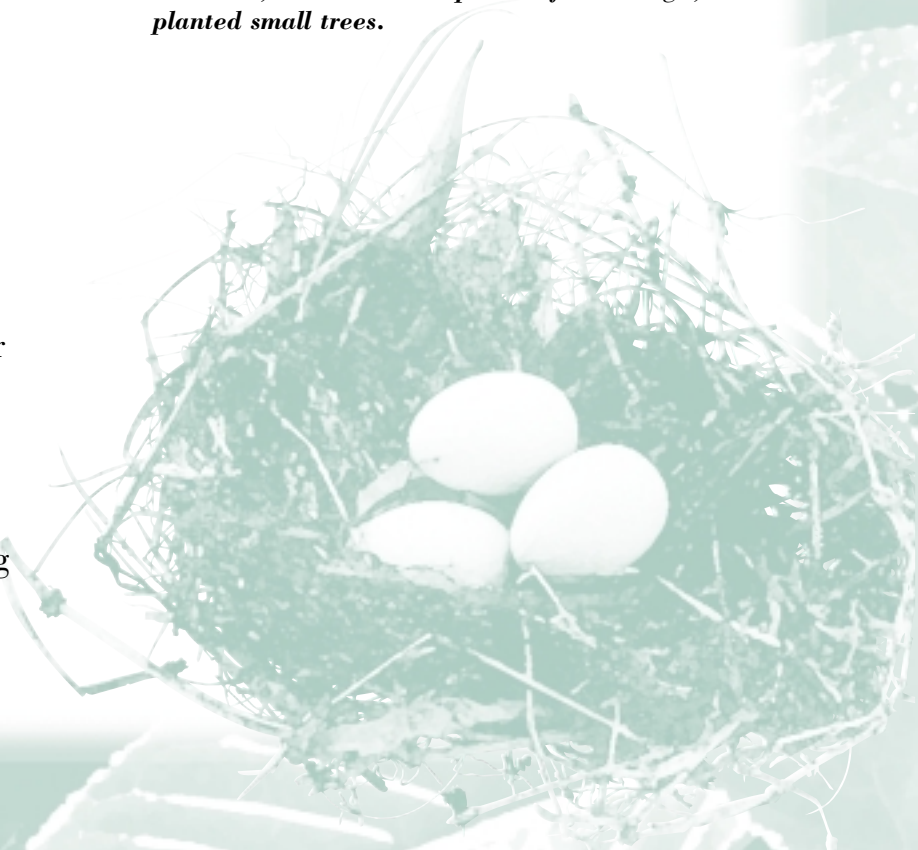
Leos can make a difference

Before starting an environment project, Leos should . . .

- Investigate the community's environmental needs. Decide the type of environment project - air, water, land, or caring for the human condition - that is most needed in the community.
- For project suggestions, contact local environment leaders. This can include leaders in government, industry and civic groups.
- Contact the Lions district environment chairman for suggestions as well as possible assistance.
- Select an environment project.
- Contact other local Leo clubs for possible assistance.
- Develop an action plan.
- Include strategies for publicizing the project.



Zinzina Dikutala of the Bukavu-Kahuzi Leo Club, Democratic Republic of the Congo, planted small trees.



Consider implementing one of these successful Leo projects

Purify the air

- Use automobiles less. Bicycle, walk, or share automobile rides more often.
- Maintain automobile engines. In the USA, leaky car air conditioners are the primary source of dangerous chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) emissions into the atmosphere. CFCs destroy the Earth's protective ozone layer.
- Avoid polystyrene plastics. When polystyrene breaks or melts, CFCs are released into the atmosphere.
- Be aware that smoke from cigarettes, cigars, the burning of leaves, and the burning of garbage pollute the air we breathe.

Clean the waterways

- Clean debris from waterways and shorelines. Restock fresh waterways with fish.
- Stencil "No dumping" on public sewer grids.
- Install fencing to discourage the throwing of garbage into waterways.
- Donate potable water tanks to provide remote villages with clean drinking water.



Members of this Leo club donated supplies to a local animal shelter.

Protect the land for plants and animals

- Clubs, districts, and multiple districts can organize clean-up projects on public highways, railroad tracks, nature trails, parks, and bus stops.
- The planting of trees is an important environment project. Leos can work alone or with other groups to plant trees. National arbor days provide groups with the opportunity to plant hundreds of seedlings in a single day. Leo clubs can also plant trees as living memorials to loved ones.
- Organic substances should be returned to the earth. Leos can create community compost heaps or teach homeowners how to create backyard compost heaps.
- Leos can help animals by volunteering at wildlife shelters. Clubs can also donate food and towels for use at the shelters.
- Maintaining bird feeding stations is another way for Leos to help wildlife.
- To protect the nests of endangered sea turtles, Leo clubs can clear debris from shorelines.

Recycling projects

- Recycling paper, plastic, aluminum, and glass is one way of demonstrating stewardship for the planet. Leos can volunteer at their local recycling center.
- If a recycling center does not exist, Leos can join together with other Leo clubs, Lions clubs, or other service groups to develop this long-term community project.
- Leos can implement special recycling programs for the proper disposal of items such as used batteries, large telephone books, paint, and motor oil.
- Providing schools, parks, or beaches with recycling bins is another Leo environment service project option.
- During Leo club meetings and service projects, Leo clubs should recycle all appropriate items.
- Leo clubs can sponsor an art sculpture contest using recyclable products.



The Guatemala Quiche Leos collected newspapers for recycling.



The Bermuda High School for Girls Leos participated in a trash-a-thon along the shoreline.

Celebrate World Environment Day

- June 5 is United Nations World Environment Day. On this day, Leos can help educate the community about environment issues.
- Leos can create exhibits or organize public lectures about the importance of protecting the rain forest. Leos can display examples of rain forest products such as teak, rosewood, mahogany, and ebony.
- Leos can also teach the public about protecting endangered animals. Cockatoos, pythons, iguanas, red-footed tortoises, and macaws are all on the endangered species list.
- From the sale of t-shirts and other products promoting the environment, Leos can raise funds for environment groups.



Resources

Before implementing an environment project, Leos should contact local environment agencies. City, township, state, and national agencies may be able to provide Leos with suggestions for appropriate projects. In addition, these agencies may need assistance with ongoing environment projects.

Leos can purchase the Lions District Environment Chairman's Guide (IAD-70) from the Program Development Department at International Headquarters (US\$5 each). Leo clubs should consider implementing joint environment projects with other Leo or Lions clubs in the district. Together, Leos and Lions can develop either larger or more permanent projects.

The Internet is another environment resource for Leos. Information about new organizations and projects constantly appears on the pages of the World Wide Web.

The following list includes environment resources which may be of assistance to Leos.

EarthWatch Institute

680 Mount Auburn Street
Watertown, MA 02472-9104
USA
telephone: 617-926-8200
fax: 617-926-8532
e-mail: info@earthwatch.org
web site: www.earthwatch.org/

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

P.O. Box 30552
Nairobi, Kenya
telephone: 254-2-623114 or 230084
fax: 254-2-623692 or 623927
e-mail: unepinfo@unep.org
web site: www.unep.org/unep/per/ipa

United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

401 M Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20460-0003
USA
telephone: 202-260-2090
web site: www.epa.gov/

Worldwatch Institute

1776 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20036-1904
USA
telephone: 202-452-1999
fax: 202-296-7365
e-mail: worldwatch@worldwatch.org
web site: www.worldwatch.org/

World Health Organization (WHO)

Avenue Appia 20
1211 Geneva 27
Switzerland
telephone 41-22-791-2111
fax: 41-22-791-0746
e-mail: info@who.int
web site: www.int/home/hq.html

World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)

Avenue du Mont-Blanc
CH-1196 Gland
Switzerland
telephone: 41-22-364-9111
fax: 41-22-364-5358
web site: www.panda.org/home.htm



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