

## West Point, N.Y.

### Celebrating Earth Day at the U.S. Military Academy

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The U.S. Military Academy (USMA) at West Point is the oldest operating U.S. post in operation. Located in the heart of the Hudson River Valley, the reservation consists of more than 16,000 acres of land, including rich mountain woodlands, lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands and an abundance of wildlife. These natural resources also include a collection of historical structures that date to the beginning of our nation's history. USMA takes the stewardship of these resources seriously and is committed to the Army's mission of sustaining the environment for a secure future.

The goal of the Directorate of Public Works (DPW) is to protect the Earth, and USMA's natural and cultural resources. All members of the West Point Community, including active duty military faculty and staff; military dependents who rely on the installation's facilities; a civilian workforce; and 4,000 West Point Cadets are committed to this endeavor

Ten years ago, the USMA established an annual three-month celebration of West Point's natural and cultural resources. DPW identified several different activities from Earth Day on April 22nd through June celebrate the community's commitment to a healthy Earth. Today, this tradition continues.

The schedule of activities for 2005 included an Earth Day poster contest for the children, a guided nature walk, an Arbor Day tree planting, a fishing seminar/fishing contest, a guided tour of the historic West Point Cemetery, and a guided boat tour of historic West Point from the Hudson River. Additionally, our Youth Activities Center offered West Point's young community the opportunity to learn how to draw trees and to make other types tree crafts. The art class was focused on having fun while learning about how and why trees are so important to the environment.

USMA's keystone Earth Day event, the Earth Day Festival was co-sponsored by the Environmental Health Office at Keller Army Hospital and is geared toward providing an educational experience for our Cadets and other community members.



In identifying subject matter experts on Earth Day topics, DPW looked both within West Point and in the local community to meet its goal of providing a wide variety of Earth Day and environmental awareness information. Experts from as far away as upstate Pennsylvania came to support the festival. Displays were presented by the Orange County Water Authority on leachate/landfills and by Penn State University on their very successful recycling program and innovative “Trash 2 Treasure” program. USMA experts were on hand to talk about the MS4 Storm Water Program and the USMA Recycling Program. Environmental health staff provided displays about regulated medical waste/hazardous waste; entomology techniques to prevent Lyme Disease and West Nile Virus; a forest ecology model titled Shifting Mosaic Sustainable Forestry, and industrial hygiene. CHPPM (Center for Health Promotion & Preventative Medicine) presented on field/garrison air/water quality and the “history” of water analysis. A local herbalist provided samples and information on the health benefits of herbs and an acoustic guitarist even provided music with a “natural” sound to top off the event. We challenged those in attendance in an Earth Day Trivia Contest and distributed prizes provided by the West Point Women’s Club.

This was the first Earth Day Festival designed for the Cadet’s educational experience and community as a whole. USMA is already growth for next year’s event.

“In order for us to be a success in the important job of managing and preserving our resources, we need the community’s involvement in preserving and defending our resources,” according to Colonel Thomas Julich, Director of Public Works. “We believe that the best way to obtain that support is to ensure that the community is knowledgeable on important environmental and cultural preservation issues.”



The USMA looks forward the 2006 Earth Day celebration and further success in preserving the resources of West Point for the future.