



5 Ways to Become an Effective Environmental Steward

1) Build a Personal Relationship with the Natural World

Learn to observe all the cycles and species of the eco-system you live in. A great way to do this is to pick a spot in a natural environment near your home such as your backyard, or a near by park or creek.

Try to visit the same spot a few times a week for a minimum of 20 minutes. When you arrive at your spot, just sit, relax and observe nature's rhythms. Try visiting this spot at different times of the day and through all four seasons of the year. When you get home, journal on what you observed. You may want

to make species lists of the birds, mammals, plants and other things you observe. Making seasonal maps of the area can be a great learning resource as well. You'll likely be amazed how much this activity will teach you about the natural rhythms and ecology of the environment you live in. If you want mentoring in this activity consider taking the Kamana Naturalist Training Program.

2) Learn about Environmental Issues from Several Resources

Before taking a stance it is important to have a clear and educated perspective on any issue. There are all kinds of resources such as: books, the internet, organizations and people that can help educate you on environmental issues both locally and globally. We highly recommend you reference several different sources when researching an issue. There is a lot of contradicting information out there and every story has two sides. When you understand both sides of an issue it will add more integrity to the actions and stance you take!

3) Follow Your Heart and Use Your Natural Gifts

There are thousands of things you can get involved with and do for the environment and only so many hours in a day. You don't need to carry the weight of the whole world on your shoulders. If you burn yourself out or get way too busy you will not be very effective as an environmental steward. Everyone has things that they are good at and things they love to do. Make a list of all your strengths and passions and make use of them in your path as an environmental steward. The more you enjoy what you are doing the more effective you will likely be. When trying to decide where to focus your time and energy, follow your heart!

4) Don't Reinvent the Wheel

A lot of energy can be put into doing activities that have all ready been done or started. If you have an idea for a local or global stewardship project, do some research and ask around. You may find people that have already begun the project and this could save you a lot of time. You may also find resources that have already been created or that are similar that can speed up your projects process. When you meet people that have done similar projects, make sure you ask them about things that worked well and things that were challenging or did not work. This can really help your efficiency and progress. We have links to lots of resources on the environmental stewardship section of our web site.

5) Live By Example

A famous and often quoted message once given from Mahatma Gandhi is, “be the change you wish to see in the world”. It is quite easy to criticize others for the way they live. It can be much more challenging to live by example. We recommend the best place to start when thinking about stewardship is looking at how you live your day to day life. Make a list of all the actions you take that are healthy for the environment and the ones that could use improvement. Some of the things that need improvement will be easy to change, so focus on them first. Some of the larger aspects of your life and living situation may be much harder to change so take baby steps and recognize it may take time to get to the lifestyle you wish to live.

Here are a few questions you may want to ask yourself: Where do I waste energy on a day to day basis and how could I be more efficient? How much of the food I eat is grown locally and how much is from over seas? Could I get this food locally instead? (you may wish to make a local food map of stores that sell locally produced food). What aspects of my life create the most amount of garbage and how could I improve this? Who else in my community could I share ideas with on living a more environmentally friendly lifestyle. We are sure you can think of lots of other great questions to ask as well.

Our last piece of advice:

Don't get down on yourself about how you have lived up until now or when you make mistakes, just do your best. It is inevitable that you will fall off track from time to time and make mistakes. It is a much more efficient use of time to learn from your mistakes or recognize you have fallen off your path and quickly get back on track then it is to sit and dwell, feeling bad about it happening in the first place!