

## **Be a Citizen Scientist!**

Human beings, unlike other living things on our planet, possess reasoning skills. Therefore, it is our responsibility to care for our planet. In order to be good stewards of Earth, we must care about it and its natural resources. We must also care about the destruction taking place everyday. To be a citizen scientist a person must first care about Earth enough to be observant to the changes taking place. Then a person must question why these changes are taking place and what can be done about them. The citizen scientist is the eyes and ears for Earth Science. He is a person who notices changes in his environment, asks questions, has the drive to find answers, and can communicate this information to others.

Earth Science includes the study of the atmosphere, biosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere, pedosphere, and several others. These topics may seem overwhelming to a single individual but almost all people observe something in at least one of these studies everyday. Changes in the weather from day to day or year to year, the change in the path of a river or stream, the discovery of an arrowhead and the pollution of a water source are all things that a citizen scientist might notice and ask questions about. Even if the person is not able to get answers himself, he can pass the information on to a specialist in the field. An observation or discovery may be big and have a huge impact on a lot of people or it might be something small that impacts only a few. The planet Earth is huge and scientists cannot be everywhere all of the time. It is the citizen scientists that can help to observe changes that may have an impact on the study of Earth.

I can contribute to the Earth sciences by being observant and curious. I have tested the soil where I live for pH levels in order to know what plants and vegetables to plant. The river that we live by is always changing levels and has changed its path in the last several years. I would be able to supply that information to scientists who might ask. I have also observed erosion taking place in the Badlands. My family recycles aluminum and plastic in order to reduce the amount of things in the landfill. We have to cut down only the number of trees necessary to build our house and we burn the wood to heat our home. I can also look for research studies taking place where I live and see if there are any activities that I can be a part of.

Citizen science is important because it keeps people observing and caring about the Earth. It instills a sense of pride in people to be able to help study our planet and conserve its natural resources.