

The world's oceans are not an endless resource.

The health of the Earth is dependent on the health of our oceans. The health of our oceans is rapidly declining. In the near future, things will be out of balance unless something is done today.

Education Facts:

- ☞ Youth are provided very little in the way of materials, awareness and experiences regarding the importance and preservation of our marine and aquatic environments (3/4 of the world).

Fisheries Facts:

- ☞ Fifteen of the world's 17 largest fisheries are overfished. Global fish production yields more than cattle, sheep, poultry or eggs, and is the biggest source of protein in the world. The worldwide fishing industry spends nearly \$125 billion per year to catch only \$70 billion worth of fish. This difference is made up by government subsidies.
- ☞ Fully one-third of the total worldwide catch (27 million metric tons) of commercial marine fisheries is discarded as "by-catch," most of which dies. This includes nontargeted fish, seabirds, sea turtles and marine mammals. The shrimp industry is even worse. Shrimp trawlers discard 80-90% of their hauls, so that for every pound of shrimp you eat, more than 4 pounds of fish are wastefully tossed overboard to die.

The Problem

Pollution Facts

- ☞ Coral reefs account for less than 1 percent of the sea floor, but are home to 25 percent of all fish species. Reefs also protect one-sixth of the world's coastlines from destruction by wave action. Yet, 25 percent of all coral reefs have been destroyed and the remaining 75 percent may not survive this century. In fact, coral reefs are disappearing at a rate equal to about 6,500 football fields EACH DAY. Much of this destruction is caused by fishing with explosives in developing nations.
- ☞ One of the most serious threats to marine ecosystems today comes from hitchhikers. Various organisms, such as the lamprey eel, zebra and green mussel have been transported worldwide in the ballast water of ships. These organisms often disrupt entire marine ecosystems. Exotic stowaways also include plants, poisonous algae and even diseases such as cholera.
- ☞ Ask most people what's the number one pollution problem facing the ocean and you're likely to hear about oil spills. The fact is that of the 5 million tons of oil that enters the oceans each year, spills from tankers and oil platforms account for only about 5 percent of the total. Twice that amount comes from sewage treatment plants, like the one down the street from you.
- ☞ As a testament to how interrelated the atmosphere and ocean truly are, fully one-third of toxic contaminants and excess nutrients entering the ocean comes from atmospheric deposition via rain and snow.
- ☞ Serving as the drainage basin for almost 40 percent of the continental United States, the Mississippi River carries so many excess nutrients into the Gulf of Mexico that oxygen loss from algal blooms has decimated all life within 4,000 square miles/10,400 square kilometers bottom area off the coast of Louisiana and Texas. Scientists refer to this as the Gulf of Mexico's "Dead Zone."