

Essay on environment

[Environment](#), [Water](#)



The beauty of the nature has been decreasing during the last two centuries due to massive human activity. Human activity has altered several aspects of nature especially due to the release of pollutants in the environment. The pollutants not only have a negative effect on the health of human beings but also to other forms of life that exist in the environment. Additionally, they have brought about a negative effect on the equilibrium of the ecosystem since artificial forces other than natural forces have taken over the control of the forces of nature. Human beings have also suffered due to the effects of their own activities that have resulted to global warming and other imbalances in the environment. I strongly agree with Buell that a comprehensive land policy must address not only human needs but also ecosystem imperilment.

In the contemporary society, most people show little or no concern about the well-being of the environment. They do not take care of their garbage thus leave them in open places where they rot and decay. Buell argues that, two decades ago it was safe for children to play near the wooden garbage boxes placed in strategic places in the neighborhoods since there were good garbage management systems (15). Such neighborhoods have turned into dangerous places not only for the children but also for wild animals. The severity of the problem has escalated significantly.

The deterioration of waste management systems has been evident in the lack of proper disposal of plastic bags leading not only to land pollution but also to ocean pollution. The Great Pacific Garbage Patch is a good example of ocean pollution. Doucette refers to it as a “ swirling vortex of plastic soup, an immense, fetid swamp of debris” (409) comprised of loads of decaying

plastics. Research has shown that it contains approximately 10 million tons of waste. The effect of some natural forces such as the sun, waves as well as wind on the wastes can be detrimental to the health of wild life. They enhance the breakdown of the large chunks of wastes to smaller particles/molecules, which pose a threat to sea life. This increases the probability of sea birds, fish and other sea animals of feeding on the particulate plastic. Some of the plastics contain toxic chemicals such as DDT that can harm the wildlife. Excessive intake of the plastics by the birds leads to their death due to starvation. The large plastic bags are also a threat to the marine organisms. Sea turtles choke to death after taking in the plastic bags. A report by the United Nations Environment Program shows that 100,000 marine mammals and one million seabirds die annually due to the effect of the plastic wastes deposited in the oceans (Doucette 410).

The use of plastics gained momentum towards the end of the first half of the last century. In the contemporary society, plastics occupy a large proportion of the items that are used daily. Such items include clothes, furniture, cell phones, as well as cooling systems. The use of plastic bottles has also been on the increase. Most of the plastic bottles are never recycled or even disposed properly. For instance, more than four-fifths of the plastic bottles in the U. S are not recycled thus end up in the land filths (Usborne 405). In 2010, the world used approximately three million tones of plastics. However, there are not are no set global rules and regulations that govern the use as well as the disposal of plastics around the globe. This has led to the inability to keep track of the plastics thus end up landing in the oceans. For instance, the United States has not been able to account for nearly 11.3 billion

kilograms of plastics that are used in the country every year (ibid).

When fish and the other marine organisms ingest the plastic, the particulate matter of the plastics attaches itself to the fatty tissues of the body. The chemicals/plastics are passed to other animals through the food chain. It is noteworthy that there is no scientific method of dislodging the chemicals from the body of the fish and animals. Some of the compounds that result from the breakdown of the plastics e. g. PCBs and DDT affect the reproduction system of sea mammal posing a threat to the balance of the ecosystem. The two compounds also have negative effects on the functioning of the human liver and skin besides being carcinogenic.

The use of plastic materials is a controversial issue as far as global warming is concerned. As aforementioned, the world's utilization of plastic bottles and bags is high. The production of such materials leads to the emission of greenhouse gases that have highly contributed to global warming. According to Usborne, the use of products such as bottled water have a negative effect to the ecology since it takes not only oil but also energy all of which contribute to global warming (405).

Global warming is among the aspects that are posing a great threat to human beings and the entire ecosystem. Carbon dioxide is one of the gases that contribute to this phenomenon. It is responsible for nearly half of the human-induced heating of the atmosphere. Other gases, the most notable being methane, also play a major role in the infrared forcing or rather heating of the atmosphere. The ability of water vapor to retain heat in the atmosphere also makes it contributor to global warming. Due to the increase of human activities that involve the combustion of fossil fuels, the balance of

heat retaining gases in the atmosphere has exhibited an increasing trend in the recent past. The levels of carbon dioxide and methane during the last years of the twentieth century were higher than any time since man ever walked on earth (Goyal 8). Research has shown that there is little likelihood that the many organisms especially trees will be able to withstand the high temperature posing a threat to the ecosystem's equilibrium with the future climate. Approximately, 80% of human activity is fuelled by energy, which produces carbon dioxide as one of its byproducts. Additionally, most automobiles produce heat and other greenhouse gases.

The two main forces that naturally absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere have been endangered. When the trees are burned, dying or decaying, they become sources of carbon dioxide and other green house gases instead of absorbing the excessive carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Deforestation has been on the increase since the 1980s. One of the world's renowned ecologists, Barry Commoner, noted that the amounts of fossil fuels that are burnt in the contemporary society represent the carbon captured by photosynthesis over millions of years (Goyal 9). In February 1999, deforestation was indicated as the major cause of the death of dozens of people as well as the massive destruction of property that occurred due to floods, which shut down the industrial capital of South America. During the same period, flooding provoked the unprecedented destruction in Caracas, Venezuela. Deforestation also intensified the death and destruction wrought in Central America by the Hurricane Mitch. The oceans also play a pivotal role in the absorption of atmospheric carbon dioxide.

The effects of global warming on the environment include coastal erosion, higher storm surges as well as saltwater intrusion into the coastal estuaries and groundwater supplies. Research has shown that the phenomenon is already affecting a broad spectrum of marine species and ecosystems. For much of the past century, the level of oceans and seas has been rising slowly. This has been evidenced by the erosion of the sandy beaches along the coasts, including 90% of the American sandy beaches. The increase in water levels has also caused the displacement of people around the coasts. Scientists have also reported that there has been a significant increase in the ocean's in-depth temperatures, which pose a great threat the existence of marine life.

Most of the rivers in the world have also been victims of detrimental human activity. Many rivers in the world, large and small, are drying up before reaching their natural destinations. Dams as well as diversions alter the timing and the volume of river flows on a wide geographic scale. The manipulation of the waters in the rivers has been beneficial to the humanity. Some of the benefits include the generation of hydroelectric power, the expansion of irrigated agriculture and the facilitation of trade along the shipping routes. However, it has caused serious losses on the ecological side of the ledger (Postel, and Ritcher 103). Most governments focus on only two aspects as far as the restoration and protection of natural rivers is concerned. They aim at improving the quality of water and establishing minimum flow requirements so that the rivers and streams do not run completely dry. However, these two goals have not done much to restore the functions and processes that sustain the overall system of the natural rivers

and streams.

The challenge of the twenty-first century environment management is to better the balance human demands with the needs of flora and fauna.

Meeting this challenge will require a fundamentally new approach to valuing and managing the natural resources. The most promising approaches should incorporate new scientific knowledge, new management practices and new policy tools. During the 1990s, international protocols called for freezes or reduction in fossil fuel combustion. However, the use of the fossil fuels in the last two decades exhibited an increasing trend.

The policy should address the disposal of plastic products. Governments should impose rules concerning the manufacture, use and disposal of the plastics. They should also urge the plastic producing companies to embark on the development of eco-friendly materials that would serve the same purpose as the plastic products. Concerning the disposal of the already produced plastics, the policy should provide strategies of enhancing the appropriate disposal. This should also entail the cleaning of the oceans and other dumpsites where plastics affect the lives of organisms.

The policy should also ensure that certain bodies are actively involved in curbing the ongoing environmental deterioration. Environmental protection agencies should also be included in the policy to play the role of creating environmental protection awareness. This entails educating the masses about the importance of proper disposal of wastes. In addition, people will learn about the most appropriate methods of disposal different types of wastes to prevent any form of environmental pollution. Consequently, both human beings and other organisms will live in a safe environment. The policy

needs to define the role of corporate organizations in attaining a safe environment. Corporate organizations should be in the forefront in the fight against environmental pollution.

The policy should also have market-based strategies to control the use of certain products. This approach uses economic variables such as subsidies, penalties or permits to provide incentives for polluters to reduce harmful emissions or adopt preferred energy technologies. Some of the policies would include carbon taxes on fossil fuel intensive energy resources and provision of subsidies for clean energy technologies.

Works Cited

Buell, Lawrence. *Literature, Culture, and Environment in the U. S and Beyond*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001. Print.

Doucette, Kitt. "An Ocean of Plastic." *Science and Society* 7. 1(2009): 409-412. Print.

Goyal, Arvind. *Global Warming and Preventive Measures*. Delhi: Navyug Publishers and Distributors, 2009. Print.

Postel, Sandra, and Ritzer, Brian. *Rivers for Life: Managing Water for People and Nature*.

Washington, DC: Island Press, 2003. Print.

Usborne, David. "Bottled Out." *Science and Society* 7. 1 (2009): 405-407. Print.