

Made by Nature, Not by Man

When you hear that we are using up the natural resources of our planet, and that we need 1 ½ Earths to sustain our current population of 7 billion people, what do they mean?

Natural resources are everything that is provided for us by nature. They are not made by man. They can either be renewable or non-renewable. We call it a renewable resource if it grows again or comes back after we use it. A non-renewable resource does not grow or come back, or it takes a very long time before it is replenished.

Read more about what our natural resources are, their state and how we can all help preserve it. Once you know how dependent we are on nature, you'll realize how important these resources are to the welfare of all living things on Earth.

Our Natural Resources

Take note that the Earth is a Closed System. Nothing goes in and out of the planet except Energy. The materials we have on the planet is all we have. No one will replenish them unless we go to another planet and get the materials we need. Some of these materials are needed to sustain the living things on the planet, and we have learned how to use many of these materials to advance our technologies.

The materials produced by nature and used by mankind are called Natural Resources. Here are the Top 5:

Water

One of the most important natural resource is water. Our Earth is a water planet and $\frac{3}{4}$ of the planet is covered with this life-giving resource. You'd think we'd have enough supply. But 97% of all the water on the planet is salty, we cannot drink it. Only 3% is freshwater, and 2% of that is frozen in the ice caps or in glaciers. In reality, we only have 1% of freshwater available.

Fresh water is a renewable resource, but somehow, the world's supply of groundwater is being depleted at an alarming rate. We use water for so many of our activities – in the household, in agriculture to grow crops and animals, during recreation, in the factories – most of our activities require freshwater. Only a very small percentage of our water supply is used for drinking.

Freshwater can be found either in the surface or underground. On the surface, it's found on rivers and lakes. It's replenished when it rains and it is depleted through evaporation.

Groundwater is located beneath the earth, between soil and rocks. This is where we get our water supply at home.

Frozen freshwater, is found in glaciers, icebergs and in the polar icecaps. The problem is due to global warming, these valuable sources are melting. If they all melt, that would severely deplete our sources of freshwater.

So many people today have no access to fresh drinking water. Help conserve this precious resource by closing your faucets when not in use and

recycling water where you can.

Sunlight

Another valuable resource that we take for granted. Although you can't measure how much of it we use, and you don't notice the effect we have on it. We may not be able to affect the sun, but if we continue to pollute the environment, someday, the nourishing rays of the sun may not reach us anymore.

Air

Without the oxygen we breathe, we will perish. It's that simple. Contaminated air causes all kinds of health problems. Look at the smog covering our cities... that's what we're breathing today. That's why asthma and other pulmonary problems are common these days. We can help minimize pollution by riding bikes on short distances, and not using our vehicles too much. We can also patronize companies who manufacture their products without polluting the environment.

Rainforests

Trees provide oxygen to the planet and these magnificent resource gives us shade. It keeps cities from flooding and absorb the carbon dioxide in the air. Unfortunately, it was also used to make paper and is a highly coveted resource. Not just the trees, but the land itself. As our cities grew, we chopped down acres of forest to clear the land.

It is said that by 2030, we may only have 10% of our rainforests left. Just imagine what happens to all the living things in the forest. Whole ecosystems die when we clear an area. To date, over 13 million hectares of forests have been converted for other uses. Can you imagine our world without trees?

To help save trees, reuse and recycle paper, or don't use them at all. Many companies and individuals are going paperless to save our rainforests.

Coal

Coal is the cheapest energy resource and the most abundant in the fossil family. Humans have utilized it from the time of our cavemen ancestors. What keeps it from being the best thing ever discovered, is its negative effect to the environment.

- The use of Coal is the cause of 40% of the carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuels
- It is a primary contributor to global warming
- Coal mining is a hazardous job, and has caused thousands of deaths among the workers since it was discovered.