

Recycle Ann Arbor 2007 Earth Day Essay Contest – Runner-Up Winner

America's Future: What If We Didn't Recycle?

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What would it be like to live a country covered in landfills and toxic fumes? How can we stop this onslaught of trash that is not only harming animals, our natural resources and our economy, but also causing more pollution? We can recycle. Recycling in America will help to reduce damage to our country and help to save energy. For example, when you recycle a glass bottle, you save enough energy to power a 100-watt bulb for hours. So what would happen if we didn't recycle at all?

If we didn't recycle, there would be much more pollution than we already have. Air pollution, for example, makes smog and causes the disintegration of the ozone layer. Factories and the use of cars and aerosol cans can damage the ozone layer. When the ozone layer deteriorates, it lets more heat from the sun into our atmosphere, creating global warming. Global warming causes the Arctic and Antarctic to melt and flood the places in our country that are below sea level. Some of these places are New Orleans, Houston, Miami, Charleston, New York City, Boston, and even Washington D.C.

If nobody recycled, it would cause more pollution. Water has a cycle that it follows, and the same water has been through that cycle since it has been on our planet. So if we pollute the water, we can't renew it. When trash that could be recycled is thrown into rivers and lakes, it puts toxins in the water and we can't drink it. If that happened, the most important natural resource in the world would be gone.

Many other natural resources could disappear if we don't recycle. Recycling paper saves many different things. In fact, by recycling one ton of paper we can save 98 tons of various resources. Seventy five percent of a tree isn't even used in a finished ream of

paper, so reusing or recycling paper instead of just throwing it away can save many trees. But why are trees so important to humans? They're very useful for forts and games, but the main thing we need them for is the relationship between plants and animals. Animals inhale oxygen, and exhale it as carbon dioxide. The carbon dioxide can then go to plants, which change it into oxygen for us to breathe. There is a delicate balance between plants and animals, and if we use too many trees for all life on earth could be wiped out.

The loss of natural resources affects animals too, but they have even more to deal with than us. Animals haven't evolved to deal with the invasive nature of humankind. Our landfills are taking over animal's habitats and causing many species to become endangered. Animals like black footed ferrets and prairie dogs are in danger of becoming extinct. The six-pack holders that we find on soda cans can strangle animals like birds, raccoons, and even cats when we don't reuse them or recycle them. When we throw away food containers that could be reused or recycled, we could be poisoning animals that are eating the food scraps. We are harming many animals by either invading their habitat or killing them.

Animals would be harmed if we didn't recycle, and so would our economy. Recycling saves a lot of money and creates many jobs for people around the country. Although many Americans think that landfills and incinerators are more cost-effective than recycling, it isn't true. Statistics show that when recycling programs are designed properly, they save at least as much money as landfills and incinerators would. Recycling plants also create many more jobs than people would think. There would be many more unemployed people in the US if we didn't recycle. There are jobs like picking up the recycling on people's drives, sorting trash from recycling material, and working at the recycling plant. There are so many people without jobs. If we didn't recycle, there would be even more unemployed people in America.

We need to save wildlife, preserve natural resources, decrease pollution and much more. Recycling is the biggest and easiest way to help the future of our country. Save the future of America. Start recycling.

Bibliography

“Geography Alive” geography book

“Writing Express” writer’s handbook

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