

# Deforestation and “The End of Us All”

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The forests of the world are decreasing so rapidly that it is estimated that in about 100 years, all of the world’s rainforests could disappear. Over 32 million acres of forests have been deforested globally between the years 1995 and 2005 (Pellerin).

The forests are essential to the well-being of millions of creatures. Forests are home to about 70% of land animals and plants on Earth (National Geographic). When these forests are destroyed, the species that reside in the forests die, causing other species that depend on this species to suffer greatly; if not to die as well. Approximately 50-100 species of life become extinct every day because of the impact of deforestation (Stock & Rochen). Not only are forests important for many animals, but they are also important to the health of humans. Approximately 25% of all medicines discovered so far come from the forests (Stock & Rochen). There are yet more cures to be discovered, and with the help of plants in the forests, many people could be cured from diseases such as AIDS, cancer, etc. (Stock & Rochen). If we eliminate these forests, cures to these diseases may never be found. In addition to medicine, many valuable spices that make our food tastier are also found in the forests (Stock & Rochen). Trees also help regulate the climate on Earth. They provide shade that cools the ground and air below them and trap carbon dioxide and pollutants in the atmosphere, creating a cleaner atmosphere that is healthier for our lungs (Stock & Rochen). Trees also prevent erosion and landslides (Stock & Rochen). The roots of the trees hold the soil in place. When trees are cut down, nutrients are washed out of soil because the trees aren’t present to hold the nutrients in place. Therefore, it is hard to replant trees in areas of deforestation (Stock & Rochen). The forests will never be the same once they’ve been deforested. Lastly, flooding is a huge consequence of deforestation (Stock & Rochen). When trees are not around to hold the soil in place and soak up water, water can easily flood an un-forested area.

Also, deforestation accounts for one fifth or 20% of green house gas emissions yearly (Gray). When trees are burnt, they release carbon dioxide that they have stored their whole lifespan (Gray). Also, when trees are cut down, they can no longer absorb carbon dioxide in the atmosphere (Gray). In order to stop an increase in carbon dioxide, deforestation needs to end.

Logging and clearing land for agriculture are the two main causes for deforestation in the world (Stock & Rochen). Many businesses need the paper products that logging provide. It is estimated that the Mc Donald’s company needs about 800 square miles of trees to make enough paper for the amount of paper products they need in one year (Stock & Rochen). And then what happens to all of that paper? Is it recycled or simply thrown away to litter the landfills? Most of the time, the paper is thrown away. All of the paper that could have belonged to life-bearing forests is now in the landfills. Another cause for deforestation is cattle (Stock & Rochen). Beef! People eat beef all of the time! So, in order to get all of this necessary beef, we need cattle; and cattle need land to graze on. Trees are cut down to build farms for cattle in many parts of the world. In farms near cities with a high rate of urbanization, farmers are kicked off their land so that new homes can be built to house the growing population (Stock & Rochen). These farmers

desperately move into the forests, where they clear land for farming (Stock & Rochen). They need this land for shelter and profit (Stock & Rochen).

In December 2009, almost 200 nations at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen formed an agreement called the Copenhagen Accord (Pellerin). The purpose of this Copenhagen Accord was to stop the rise of global temperature by reducing green house gas emissions. The United States, Australia, France, Japan, Norway, and the United Kingdom agreed to give 3.5 billion dollars to slow down and eventually end deforestation in developing countries (Pellerin). These nations would give money to the governments of the developing countries which would then give money to the farmers to prevent them from farming to gain a profit (Pellerin).

So, what else can be done about the deforestation? It is hard to think of a solution to these problems because so many people need paper, food, homes, profit, etc. The best solution to offer for this impending issue in industrialized countries is to use paper products in great moderation. The United Nations could enforce global laws in many developed countries to recycle and reduce the amount of paper used. If every country in the world were to enforce the use of recycling, a whole lot of paper products could escape the landfills and be recycled instead, saving lots of forests. A solution to the problem of deforestation in developing countries is for these countries to offer jobs and homes to people whose farms are to be used for the expansion of cities. If this were to happen, farmers would not have to clear land for foresting in order to get a profit.

Deforestation is a problem that affects millions of creatures all over the world, including humans. When precious forests are cut down, life suffers. It is a situation that the world needs to deal with immediately before too many trees are cut down because this is a widespread issue that is found all over the world. Forests used to cover about 90% of the total land surface in the Middle Ages and now only cover about 30% of the total land surface (National Geographic). The United Nations would do well for the world if they would deal with this issue that affects the health of so many living things.

My painting, titled **The Death of Us All** (below), shows how terrible deforestation truly is. At the upper left hand corner of the painting is a beautiful forest full of lively plants and animals. Then, at the bottom on the left side is a bulldozer that is cutting down trees. Animals are running away from the bulldozer with blood running down their sorrowful bodies because of the destruction of the forests. In the background is a fire that is burning down trees that have been cut down to clear land. This painting is supposed to symbolize the tragedy of the deforestation and the effect it has on the life in the forests. Deforestation is a terrible act that is greatly hurting our environment; an issue that needs to be dealt with immediately.

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