
Possible Consequences of Deforestation Main Concepts

“By the year 2030, we might only have 10% of rainforests left” (The World Counts). According to Dictionary.com, deforestation is described as “the clearing or severe thinning of a forest or other wooded area, leaving few or no trees”. Brazil is the country with the highest deforestation rate, however, it seems like any place where there are humans and trees, there is deforestation to some degree, for some purpose.

The history of deforestation seems quite simple, humans needed a place to build homes and make farmland back when we first started industrializing. According to History Today, “a possible nine-tenths of all deforestation happened before 1950.” National Geographic states that “In North America, about half of the forests in the eastern part of the continent were cut down between 1600 and 1870.”

Deforestation has been an increasing problem in the world. Today, more than ever, it is considered a contemporary topic due to how much of the forests we have cleared out, either by logging or burning. Buildings and farmland (large and small scale) are the main reasons deforestation still occurs today, however, in our modern world, factories are also in place of what used to be deep, dense forests.

I have seen it happen around me since I was little, although deforestation most greatly affects the rainforest (in numbers), I have watched it happen right here in Missouri. When going to the creeks when I was younger, there was nothing but forest and wildlife around me. Now, the same route has less forest and more new houses and buildings.

Without trees, human life would not survive. Humans alone rely on trees for many things, including the most important thing, the air we breathe. It is our responsibility to care about our forests and other natural habitats and to stop removing them for convenience.

By clearing out forests we are decreasing land quality, risking extinction of many plants and animals, and threatening the discovery of modern medicine. We are also causing overall danger to humans, including developing countries around the world, and the countless number of indigenous people who rely on our forests for life.

By cutting down our natural forests, we are decreasing our overall land quality. According to WWF, “half of the topsoil on the planet has been lost in the last 150 years.” Roots of trees help to hold soil in place. When the tree is cut down, the roots die. Thus, the soil is now loose, and is washed away with rain. This washed away soil finds its way into waterways, causing threats to fish and other species, as well as threatening our fresh water supply with fertilizer, pesticides, and other dangerous chemicals humans put on the ground all the time.

Before being flushed into the ocean, it is circulated back into our wells, and we drink it and use it for cooking, unaware of the harmful particles we may be drinking. Eventually, this water will end up in the ocean, causing the pH level to rise, which potentially harms, and may even kill our marine wildlife. When left alone, trees thrive off of the water and through their natural processes, release clean, ready to breathe air back into our environment, and act as a filter for the water.

Deforestation is dangerous to humans. Trees absorb carbon dioxide out of the air, which helps to balance out all of the gas admissions we release as humans. When we cut down the tree, all of the carbon dioxide that has been stored inside the tree is released, adding it into the atmosphere. Further, burning those trees even further releases these gases into the air we breathe. Deforestation by itself causes roughly 10% of worldwide emissions (Rainforest Alliance).

Deforestation causes another alarming effect that most people probably have not thought about. Many diseases such as Malaria are on the rise, and scientist are contributing it to deforestation. Having nothing blocking the sun, mosquitoes can more easily breed. Many diseases live primarily in the jungle, multiplying through animals. Most animals have adapted to such diseases and show little to no side-effects.

Humans do not have the antibodies to fight such diseases, as they have never carried them before. When humans intervene, either directly cutting the forest down or living in that area afterword, the diseases jump from insects and animals to humans. Many diseases known to affect humans were originally found in insects or animals, including SARS and Ebola. "In years where there is a lot of land clearance, you get a spike in leptospirosis [a potentially fatal bacterial disease] cases, and in malaria and dengue," says Peter Daszak, the president of Eco Health Alliance.

Deforestation is contributing an alarming amount to extinction of our plants and animals. According to World Animal Foundation, forests hold 80% of our world's biodiversity. Rainforests themselves house around 50% of our animal, insect, and plant population (Green Tumble). Animals are facing great habitat loss. The removal of land directly affects their food, shelter, and overall life.

Once so much of their habitat is destroyed, species cannot freely live. They are pushed closer together, causing there to be more competition for food and breeding. This also creates a greater risk for human-wildlife conflicts, causing more animals to be closer to humans and creating the risk of them being shot or hit by vehicles. Deforestation diminishes the resilience to wildfires, posing an even greater risk to animals.

Due to not being able to find things that are in their normal diet, deforestation can drive animals to eat things they wouldn't normally. This can have a drastic effect on the animal. An estimated 137 species of the world's animals, plants, and insects go extinct every single day (World Wildlife Foundation). Nothing can live without adequate food, climate, or shelter, and we are taking these things from our animals every day.

A lot of scientists believe that most of our problem with climate change is linked to deforestation. Forest get rid of a lot of the carbon in the air, which is turn is diminishing the greenhouse effect. Without forests, this carbon is staying in our air. When a group of trees are taken out, all of their stores carbon is released back into the air. Climate change itself causes many harmful and potentially deadly affects to our animals.

Warmer water temperatures affect the migration of marine wildlife, and can even change costal currents. Polar bears and other various animals that live in the arctic are greatly affected by the warming temperatures and ice caps melting, as they rely on the frigid air and water for survival.

Many insects are also being affected. Losing our insect population will directly diminish our wildlife population, as thousands of species of animals rely on insects for food. Insects also pollinate our crops, so losing insects will greatly affect humans in an agricultural way. If we diminished, or at least lessened deforestation, climate change rates would fall drastically.

Over 50% of drugs that are prescribed to humans are derived from chemicals that were first discovered in plants. Over 100 items on the lists of “active ingredients” on our medication bottles come from plants in some way, including the often-prescribed morphine, atropine, and benzyl benzoate. Aspirin is one of the most recognized, derived from a willow tree.

There are so many plants out there that humans don't even know about, much less have had the time to study to test if they have the ingredients known, or could even possibly be used, to treat disease in humans. When deforestation eventually causes a plant species to go extinct, it would make it virtually impossible for humans to recreate this drug, especially if they never knew it existed in the first place.

Synthetic drugs are the alternative to this, and doing this could be very dangerous and expensive. Once approved, each drug must go through a series of tests to compare the side effects, and to test if it is overall appropriate for human consumption. Many times, these drugs seem impossible to recreate. We also need plants to test them for toxins. We need to know as much about what is toxic to humans and animals as we can, so that we can advance in our health and beauty industries.

It is estimated that in 100 years, there will be no rainforests. Deforestation holds a great impact on the world's indigenous population. According to Worldbank, the world holds a population of around 476 million indigenous people, ranging throughout 90 countries. Many forest people are poor, and they rely on the forest for all of their livelihood and enjoyment. They use the forest for shelter, clothes, food, medicines, and for activities.

Often, indigenous people use the forest as a resource in teaching their children life skills, such as how to hunt and make clothes. When we cut the forests down, we are taking everything from them. They use the forest, and things found in the forest, for everything they do. It is almost like a death sentence for our fellow humans, who have done absolutely nothing wrong.

People think that deforestation is a good thing for many reasons. People argue that cutting our forests down creates more space for buildings and agriculture (the most common reason for deforestation), that it helps produce more wood for human use, and also that it creates more space for animal grazing. Deforestation gives us access to things we use every day, including wood and paper, two of the most important things for humans. It also has an economic benefit, as a lot of our industries are driven off of the money our economy makes from the trees that are cut down.

Tax revenues due to deforestation help to fund roadwork and schools. Our population is growing, and we need places to house people. There are many families who rely on a logging job for their main income, and losing this money may be harmful to the environment.

Even though these reasons are true, we could come up with a solution that is not just plowing everything down. Companies should implement a zero-deforestation supply chain. This would make a big difference, and would force supply chains to figure out a way to produce what they

need, without directly cutting down forests to gain access to the supplies. Companies could also work with as many recycled products as possible, and redirect their packaging to glass or paper, and packaging things into large quantities. The individual wrapping of products is causing way more waste than necessary.

We could try to stick to a more plant-based diet, thus needing less farmland meat. We can also plant fields of more renewable resources, such as hemp. Hemp grows very fast and can be used for a vast majority of things, including many things that we are currently using wood and plastic for. The new crops can create jobs and incomes for families. We could work on tearing old houses and buildings that are no longer habitable, and rebuilding in those areas.

Recycling is one of the main practice's humans can partake in to help combat deforestation. Many items can be recycled. Aluminum is a product that can be recycled over and over without losing any value. Other items can be restored or even remade into something else altogether. It is estimated that if we recycled every newspaper, over 250 million trees could be saved each year.

Education is one of the most powerful drives in the world. We should educate our younger generation about what deforestation means and how it is hurting our world. We should push planting trees in schools, and teach students about how to do their part. In reality, consumers have the biggest impact on this issue. If we quit buying products that fuel deforestation, large scale companies that contribute will have no other option but to change the way they do things.

We should completely eliminate clear-cutting of forests. This would make it to where at least some of the trees are saved. It would help a great amount to just thin out forests, rather than cutting them down altogether. Sustainable bioenergy is a great alternative to deforestation. This process takes energy that is produced by plants from the sun's energy and uses it towards creating some of the electricity and liquid fuels we use.

The government can implement more protected areas, making less and less of our forest able to be bought and cleared off. If the government would set harsher laws, that can be a solution. A lot of the timber harvested each year is done illegally, and laws may help cut this number down.

There are numerous reasons we should put an end to deforestation. It is threatening to both humans and animals in numerous ways, including diseases and the threat of losing pivotal medicines. It also greatly affects our indigenous people in a negative way. We need to wake up and realize all of the negative affects deforestation really has, and focus on ways to lesson or to stop it all together. "A nation that destroys its soils destroys itself. Forests are the lungs of our land, purifying the air and giving it fresh strength to our people." Franklin D. Roosevelt.