The Pollution And Misuse Of Our Water Essay, Research Paper

The pollution and misuse of our water

I have chosen to write my paper on the effects that we have on our most important resource, water. The article I chose to go along with my paper was out of The Detroit News 5-24-00. The article discussed the problems that Metro Detroit has had with their outbreaks of e. coli in many of the area beaches. After reading the article I thought that it would be a great idea to look further into the problems our country faces with water and the way we use it.

In the past fifty years nations have gone to war over oil. In the next fifty years we are going to go to war over water (Simon 18).

The current world population of approximately 5.9 Billion will double in the next forty -ninety years. To further compound the water shortages, human consumption of water is rising twice as fast as the population. The exponential population growth has a severe effect on the amount of water being used and the amount of pollutants that go back into it. Take for example the problems that people in California are having with water and trying to get it. California’s current water use is unsustainable. In many areas, ground water is being used at a rate that exceeds the rate of natural replenishment. Fish and wildlife species are being destroyed by withdrawal of water, as well as by development. Official projections are that water demand will exceed available supplies in the year 2020 (Simon 18).

California is the nations most populated state with over 1,400 reservoirs and the most sophisticated water supply system in the world (Rosenbaum 167). However it appears from studies that they will be experiencing some severe water shortages in the years to come. Many things have led to the shortages in California especially over population and desiccation. Towards the beginning of the century, Los Angeles understood that they would have problems, so they purchased Owens Lake the third largest body of water in the state. Today it is called Owens Dry Lake because it was sucked dry by Los Angeles. Today The U.S. Environment Protection Agency considers it the most polluted area in the nation (Simon 22). On dry days the wind blows particulate matter from the dry lake as far as fifty miles making the air twenty times as high as the maximum safety standards for air pollution.

Another example of misuse of water in this region involves The Colorado River. Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming signed an agreement in 1922. Ratified by the federal government, the Colorado River Compact allocated a specific number of acre-feet of water to the nine participating states. There is no question that the Colorado River is significantly over allocated. The river provides water for more that 20 million people and irrigates more than 1 million acres. In 1997 California was forced to use twice as much of there allocated 4.4 million acre-feet. The river once flowed plentifully with fresh water to the sea. Now after the water is divided to the participating states the water doesn’t always get to the ocean, and when it does it has become loaded with pesticides and salination. Similar problems have happened in Florida. In 1993 the Florida Bay suddenly became dead. The reason, the high concentrations on fertilizer and pesticides among other chemicals flowing from large agricultural developments especially sugar plantations (Challand 134). This along with manipulation of traditional sources of freshwater are believed to be responsible for the collapse of the bay’s ecosystem.

The problems are not just in the lakes, rivers or oceans. We are also seeing our environment being seriously compromised by traditional ground and surface water withdrawals. The use of ground water is almost entirely unmonitored and uncontrolled in many states across the country. Even Michigan has problems with their water. Although Michigan has a tremendous amount of fresh water many communities have suffered from quality issues or contaminated ground water.

There are a number of reasons why we are feeling the water shortages and pollution problems today. Just as we say nothing can be entirely thrown away, making progress in the environment is like a vicious circle. Sometimes something we do does good for one part of the environment but causes hardship on another. The over population of our country has given us the opportunity to look at other ways of being resourceful. We can now grow more crops on a smaller amount of land than we used to and be able to produce more of it. However in order to do that we need to treat the crops with more pesticides and other growth enhancing products. Although this may help to grow more crops we now need to provide more water to grow the increased amount of crops. We also then need to treat the water that is now contaminated with pesticides before we can find a safe use for it. The options have to be weighed in order to determine what effect the things we do will have on the environment.

In my opinion I feel that we have a long road ahead of us in order to see improvement in the water crisis. After researching for this paper I realized a lot of important issues about our water and just how precious a commodity it is.

Over population is by far the main cause of our problems that we are experiencing with water. Before writing this paper I wasn’t as aware of the problem that the United

States has with the shortage of water. I often thought it was more a problem with LDC. Now I’m aware that a major life-threatening problem could sideswipe even the most powerful country in the world. It is going to take major steps by the United States to lead the world in the recovery of our wasted water. We have to get other countries especially LDC educated and aware of the problems we are facing with over population and how it effects our resources. The U.S. needs to lead by example and help the LDC get to the platform of the environmental revolution that we set. We need to get people aware that rapid and wasteful use of water with too little emphasis on pollution will inevitably come back to haunt us or at least our children because we never really throw anything away.

With this in mind it can easily be seen how much we depend on each other from state to state and country to country. The Colorado River Compact is a great example of how we can never throw anything entirely away. The state of Wyoming discards a waste in the river and it travels to the lower basin where Nevada feels the effects. We need to learn from California to see what we can do in the future to prevent this from happening. We need to be able to learn what mistakes they made and make sure we don’t make the same again. If we wait much longer before acting on these water shortage problems we will find out that it may be something we can’t repair or replenish.

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