Rainforest Destruction, The Amazon Essay, Research Paper

Rainforest Destruction:

The Amazon

“We as humans have the capability of either preserving of destroying the rainforest. But whatever we decide, good or bad, will affect us all” (Author unknown). In the above quote, the saying is very true and hopefully a strong connection between this report and the quote will be noticed. This report talks about rainforest destruction towards the largest rainforest on earth, the Amazon. The destruction of this vast biome should be something that the public should know about since everyone gets affected. The importance of preserving the rainforest should be taken seriously as there are many disadvantages that will affect the unique biome itself, lives of the natives, an economy that is doomed, and in turn kill the human race.

Background Information

Facts about this Biome

What makes a rainforest biome unique depends on two things. One being its location in the tropics and the other being the amount of rainfall it receives. It is hard to generalize rainfall in the Amazon since the numbers vary greatly. Some two to eight meters rain annually, however it has been recorded before of reaching 13 meters. Also, the rainforest is the Earth’s oldest living ecosystem. Fossils date back 70 to 100 million years ago.

Facts on the Diversity that Exist in the Rainforest

Tropical rainforests cover only six percent of the Earth’s land, but they contain over half of the plant and animal species on Earth. It is really fascinating when inside four square miles of rainforest there may be as many as 1500 species of flowering plants, 750 species of trees, 125 mammals, 400 birds, 100 reptiles, and 60 amphibians. In addition, in one square meter of ground soil where the leaves decompose, up to 50 species of ants can exist. Most of the biodiversity that is found in the rainforest comes from insects. It is estimated that tens of thousands of them exist here.

Importance

Economical

This is a sensitive subject to talk about. Many environmentalists think ‘too-westerly’ about certain topics and arrogantly believe that their way of thinking is the most correct. Why then is there an economy which destroys the rainforest? Well, the people do have a right to their natural resources and that in turn helps their economy grow. Besides, did Canada and other developed countries not do the same thing? So by the westerners telling developing countries to stop cutting down their rainforests, it sounds very hypocritical. Economically, rainforests provide jobs for loggers, miners, farmers, and rubber-tappers. Things such as collecting nuts and rubber does little damage while clear cutting, mining, and building dams are devastating to the rainforest. According to the Rainforest Action Network, one can make $6,820 annually if rainforest is sustained and harvested for fruits, latex, and timber. If the rainforest is not nourished, then one can make $1,000 for timber that is clear-cut. People that are into cattle ranching gain approximately $148. (These are American dollars mentioned here.)

Environmental

The rainforest is very important as it provides 25% of today’s medicines. Who knows what kind of hidden cures are lurking secretly inside the diverse forms of vegetation? There are already plants that are helpful for illnesses like cancer, Hodgkin’s disease, and leukemia. This is one reason why rainforests are urgently needed for further research before they are gone. Another reason why rainforests are needed is to help maintain a balance in our biosphere. The plants in the rainforest store huge numbers of carbon inside themselves. When they are burned, the carbon is released as carbon dioxide and when burned at alarming rates the balance in Earth’s atmosphere tips and helps support the greenhouse problem develop further.

Towards the Natives

The natives that live in the Amazon face one major problem, which is losing their homeland. Natives have little impact on the rainforest and they take only what they need. If their home is destroyed, then they cannot live under their traditional way of life. Rivalry between rubber tappers and cattle ranchers has gotten dangerously ugly. The rubber tappers want their homeland preserved so that they can harvest rubber and nuts while ranchers cut down the forest to put the land into productive use. Death threats and killings has happened between these two.

Destruction of the Rainforest

Effects

Habitat destruction is caused by logging, cattle ranching, mining, oil extraction, hydroelectric dams and farming. Many disadvantages are to follow due to ignorance of mankind. The extinction of species will take a rising toll, infertile soils will be left behind full of iron and aluminum oxides, the economy will die off as there will be no more rainforest to cut down, the greenhouse effect will take place, and the natives will lose their culture. Sadly, scientists say that most of the tropical rainforest ecosystems will be destroyed by the year 2030 unless something is changed.

Reasons

Brazil

Brazilian Government

The Brazilian government is in trouble, financially wise. They are 143 billion dollars in debt and cannot keep up with their payments. The reason why they are in heavily debt is for them attempting to develop themselves by borrowing money from banks. Now, that the government is too busy looking for ways to pay off their debt, there is no room for further development. Things such as job creation and social services are then neglected and the people become poor.

Industrial

The big companies always seem to put the blame on someone else. They say that they only reason why they still produce or manufacture their products is due to heavy demand for it. Another excuse is that they will say that they are doing good for the poor economy in Brazil. In fact, most companies from different countries support industries that harm the rainforest because their products cost less.

People in Brazil

Many Brazilians believe that the Amazon is so vast and huge, that it cannot be harmed. When a hydroelectric project could flood an area the size of Britian, a Brazilian engineering consultant was asked on what he thought of the project. His reply was, “Yes that’s a big area, but in terms of the Amazon it’s small.” It seems that some Brazilians know what they are doing is bad, but in a sense of denyal they probably feel that they possibly cannot affect the Amazon.

International Pressures

Demands

The public may not realize it, but they are indirectly supporting the destruction of the rainforest. That is through retail consumption of products that come from the Amazon.

Financial

The American government and other big companies help finance actions that destroy the Amazon rainforest. Their cheap excuse is to aid in development of undeveloped countries. By building highways and roads, more people from the city come to the rainforest and become cattle ranchers. Thanks to the roads, the rate of deforestation has increased as more city dwellers learn to settle in.

Solutions

National

If the laws in Brazil are changed, the rate of rainforest destruction would decrease drastically. The law which is being referred to is the one where all land must be put into productive use. Unless this law is removed, nothing will change. Who will enforce such an action? Definitely not international countries for it is not any of their business. Perhaps the people of Brazil will notice this or one person will be brave enough to speak out and change things for the better.

International

Everyone can make some changes if all are wise on what they are consuming. First, buy local products so it will not support products grown in the rainforest. Then help save energy, drive less, and recycle. Also avoid buying paper, aluminum and tin products that come from the rainforests. If these are all reduced, the demand for products from the rainforest will not exist therefore saving the rainforest.

Individuals

According to the Rainforest Action Network, there are six things we can do to help save our rainforests. One is switching to tree-free paper. Tree-free paper is made from plants like straw, kenaf, and hemp. It also helps buying products with the least amount of packaging. Another alternative is to boycott companies that destroy the rainforest. One such company is the Home Depot which sell things made from ancient forests. Next, by consumers reducing their beef products, it will reduce the demand for it so there is less pressure for clearing more land. It also helps if one educates others about the rainforest. Getting involved in a local forest preservation program can help build more public parks in the city. Finally, joining Rainforest Action Network itself. They believe that they can stop rainforest destruction if enough people get involved.

Referring back to the quote in the introductory paragraph, if humans continue their actions by destroying the rainforest, mankind will eventually end. However, there is also a sense of hope for the future, that is if the human race decides to change its actions. It is just a question of it being too late or not. Just to leave off another quote describing the wonderful rainforest, a biologist Norman Myers says, “rainforests are the finest celebration of nature ever known on the planet”. Now, let it be kept that way.

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