



UNEP Topic Update

Oil Exploitation

In the past 3 months, complications with oil extraction have only worsened, as evident by the multiple headlines it has ensnared. The more recent of these updates is the issue of the Tar Sands oil spill. Tar sands, also known as oil sands or bituminous sands, are a type of unconventional oil, consisting of sand, clay, water, and petroleum. Though production of this oil is less efficient and extraction methods are more harmful to the environment, many companies resort to these oil reserves when conventional oil becomes scarce. In this case, the damage has been done to the tar sands in Canada, where there is an excessive amount of the resource.

On October 1, 2011, the bosses of Global Petroleum Company (GPC) and Glamis Group, were convicted by the Supreme Court of “ecocide” for oil extraction in Canada. Though the trial was technically a mock-up, the situation at hand was very serious. There has been an estimated number of 4,000 birds who have been either killed or injured by the oil spill, which has given fuel to the argument that companies should not be free of penalty as long as they clean up after their spills.

In addition, this brings up a new update in environmental news: the proposal of ecocide as the 5th International Crime Against Peace. Under this proposal, ecocide would be regarded as equivalent to genocide and would make decision makers completely accountable for their actions.

The following are links to some thought-provoking aspects of the issue.

The Ecocide Debate: Should Ecocide be a crime?

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FjG0_gB8u9c&feature=player_embedded

In this clip, different sides of the argument are revealed. What stance would your nation take on this particular issue?

Cops Shut Down Tar Sands Protest

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UvY1SZ4b7LQ>

The Tar Sands is known as one of the most environmentally destructive projects in North America. How does your country believe we can reduce the negative consequences of extraction without ceasing the production of oil completely? Take into account the sovereignty of nations to do as they please.



Map of the Major Oil Spills

<http://webzoom.freewebs.com/matthewstolte/MajorOilSpillsMap.jpg>

In the past century, there have been an extensive amount of oil spills. This leads to the impending question of whether the benefits from oil production outweigh the damages.

Oil Devastates Marine Life

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGC1xRPqTX0>

This vivid animation depicts the effect of oil on species that reside in polluted waters. What methods can be implemented to protect marine life?

Loss of Biodiversity

Among the numerous animals that are at risk of extinction, species of apes have been quickly dwindling. Before humans ruled the world, more than 40 species of apes existed. Now, only five remain: the gibbon, orangutan, chimpanzee, bonobo, and the gorilla. Though congress has made steps to preserve the apes through conservation programs, which were to be launched in Africa and Asia, this Great Apes Conservation Fund has never been fully implemented and may be discontinued as a result of the national debt.

Habitat destruction and hunting continues to damage populations of apes. It is terrifying to think that only 1/8th of this species is left, yet there has been little effort over the past century to correct this.

Species Extinction due to Human Activity

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vpxmTZ02FXg>

This documentary expresses the concern that we may be approaching the next massive extinction.

Endangered Polar Bears

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ElcyUmx5htA&feature=related>

The endangered polar bears in this documentary are testimony to the negative effects of global warming on biodiversity. What must be done to reduce global warming, specifically as it applies to the preservation of species?



Rate of Species Extinction

<http://www.whole-systems.org/Resources/Image10.gif>

This graph of the rate of species extinction demonstrates that as modern society progresses, the rate increases exponentially. Why is this so? What specific actions have increased in our daily lives that pose threats to species diversity?

List of Endangered Rainforest Animals

<http://www.buzzle.com/articles/endangered-rainforest-animals.html>

Examine this list of endangered rainforest animals. Imagine how extinction of these species would affect the global food chain and ultimately, how it would negatively impact our health and livelihood.