

Name: _____

Date: _____ Period: _____

Lab: Deadly Waters

Your task is to analyze the pollutants found in the river and present the data in graphical format. Retrieve a sample of “water” from the river and count the units of pollution from each source. Each circle is one unit of pollution. Graph this data as a bar graph with pollutants on the x-axis and units of pollution on the y-axis. Answer the following questions using the pollution information sheet and your graph as a guide.

1. How does sediment get into the waterway?
2. What are the effects of sedimentation?
3. Give examples of petroleum products.
4. What are some diseases caused by bacteria and viruses in waste?
5. What are organic wastes?
6. What happens when too much organic waste is in the water?
7. Where do inorganic chemicals come from?
8. What is the effect of inorganic chemicals on the waterway?
9. What is the major source of detergents and fertilizers?
10. What is eutrophication?
11. What is the effect of heated water?
12. What changes the pH of water?
13. What is the effect of pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides in the waterway?
14. What is the most common pollutant in the river you tested?
15. What pollutants would you expect to find in the Green Hope Wetland?
16. What would be the sources of the pollutants you listed in question 15?
17. List three things that you could do – starting today – to reduce the number of pollutants you add to the environment.

POLLUTANT INFORMATION SHEET

SEDIMENTS

Particles of soils, sand, silt, clay and minerals wash from land and paved areas into creeks and tributaries. In large unnatural quantities, these natural materials can be considered a pollutant. Construction projects often contribute large amounts of sediment. Certain lumbering practices affect sediments in runoff. Sediments may fill stream channels and harbors that later require dredging. Sediments suffocate fish and shellfish populations by covering fish nests and clogging the gills of bottom fish and shellfish.

PETROLEUM PRODUCTS

Oil and other petroleum products like gasoline and kerosene can find their way into water from ships, oil drilling rigs, oil refineries, automobile service stations and streets. Oil spills kill aquatic life (fish, birds, shellfish and vegetation). Birds are unable to fly when oil loads the feathers. Shellfish and small fish are poisoned. If it is washed on the beach, the oil requires much labor to clean up. Fuel oil, gasoline and kerosene may leak into ground water through damaged underground storage tanks.

ANIMAL WASTE

Human wastes that are not properly treated at a waste treatment plant and then released to water may contain harmful bacteria and viruses. Typhoid fever, polio, cholera, dysentery (diarrhea), hepatitis, flu and common cold germs are examples of diseases caused by bacteria and viruses in contaminated water. The main source of this problem is sewage getting into the water. People can come into contact with these microorganisms by drinking the polluted water or through swimming, fishing, or eating shellfish in polluted waters. Often unexpected flooding of barnyards or stock pens can suddenly increase the toxic effects of animal waste in water. Animal waste can also act as a fertilizer and create damage by increasing nutrients. (see Fertilizers)

ORGANIC WASTES

Domestic sewage treatment plants, food processing plants, paper mill plants and leather tanning factories release organic wastes that bacteria consume. If too much waste is released, the bacterial populations increase and use up the oxygen in the water. Fish die if too much oxygen is consumed by decomposing organic matter.

INORGANIC CHEMICALS

Inorganic chemicals and mineral substances, solid matter and metal salts commonly dissolve into water. They often come from mining and manufacturing industries, oil field operations, agriculture, and natural sources. These chemicals interfere with natural stream purification; they destroy fish and other aquatic life. They also corrode expensive water treatment equipment; and increase the cost of boat maintenance.

DETERGENTS, AND FERTILIZERS

Many of these substances are toxic to fish and harmful to humans. They cause taste and odor problems and often cannot be treated effectively. Some are very poisonous at low concentrations. The major source of pollution from agriculture comes from surplus fertilizers in the runoff. Fertilizers contain nitrogen and phosphorous that can cause large amounts of algae to grow. The large algae blooms cover the water's surface. The algae die after they have used all of the nutrients. Once dead, they sink to the bottom where bacteria feed on them. The bacterial populations increase and use up most of the oxygen in the water. Once the free oxygen is gone, many aquatic animals die. This process is called eutrophication.

HEATED OR COOLED WATER

Heat reduces the ability of water to dissolve oxygen. Electric power plants use large quantities of water in their steam turbines. The heated water is often returned to streams, lagoons, or reservoirs. With less oxygen in the water, fish and other aquatic life can be harmed. Water temperatures that are much lower than normal can also cause habitat damage. Deep dams often let extra water flow downstream. When the water comes from the bottom of the dam, it is much colder than normal.

ACID PRECIPITATION

Aquatic animals and plants are adjusted to a rather narrow range of pH levels. pH is a measure of the acidity of a solution. When water becomes too acid, due to inorganic chemical pollution or from acid rain, fish and other organisms die.

PESTICIDES, HERBICIDES, FUNGICIDES

Agricultural chemicals designed to kill or limit the growth of life forms are a common form of pollution. This pollution results from attempts to limit the negative effects of undesirable species on agricultural crop production. Irrigation, groundwater flow and natural runoff brings these toxic substances to rivers, streams, lakes and oceans.