

In 2007, I had the privilege to snorkel in a small fraction of the amazing Great Barrier Reef, in Australia. While also partaking in this amazing experience I was exposed to the effects our way of life was having on this ecosystem. I saw bleached coral, less fish and biodiversity, and many other unnatural occurrences. With this insight, I felt as if it was a need to expand the knowledge of this drastic happening to society.

The declining area of coral reefs is a sensitive and important topic, not only for me, but for the world. Without this beautiful ecosystem, the Earth would have so many negative effects upon itself, and the only way to stop it is to educate upon the matter and act.

The coral reef is much into comparison as to the rainforest, it is so ecologically diverse, and little is known or discovered about this habitat. With more knowledge and research, the reef could hold an abundance of medicines, chemicals, and other resources needed. The reef also creates an aesthetic location to attract tourists. And with their convenient location alongside islands and coasts, they serve as a protective barrier from many storms and other harsh impacts. Without the reefs, millions of species would be threatened, and this would affect the food income for the human population. All of these matters need to be taken into consideration when deciding to act on this crisis.

With such a massive decline in a major ecosystem, many factors contribute. First, the increase of coastal development, such as industrial, urban, and population

increase. This leads to the increase of pollution and carbon dioxide to the water, which harms the reef and the inhabitants. Coral bleaching is caused by the raise in the average temperature of the sea, due to climate change. Even if the temperature rises a degree above average, this could threaten thousands. Bleaching is a natural occurrence, but with multiple other human related factors, this process has increased dramatically. The only way to stop this is to take action and will power.

One cannot simply take on a task so massive and global, the world must work together to protect and save their world. One way to accomplish this is to conserve the water, and choose alternate pollution free transportation needs. Even if one does not live anywhere near an ocean, their choice still affects the entire world, and water always flows back into the ocean some way or another. Some schools on the coast are even excelling in the practice of planting coral reefs, and monitoring their growth. With extended research on coral reefs, and the increase in the community's involvement, coral reefs could be saved!

With all of these practices, it not only just benefits the coral reef, but other ecosystems as well. The people of the world must join in the cause of saving their planet, before it is too late. Right now it is not possible to save the coral reefs entirely, in such a short term, but you can slow down the process of their destruction. And in the long run, the coral reef will once again be an ecological wonder.

Living in Lubbock, Texas there are not many opportunities to educate over the ocean. I try and research as much as I can, and try to communicate with others the importance and impact we have on our ocean, even if we live so far away. My personal

habits have changed by driving less, trying to conserve water, recycling, and planting plants that will decrease the level of carbon dioxide in the air. With this knowledge I have begun helping other locals by building up their gardens and planting more plants in their yard and household, I also have been helping the United Way Organization by cleaning and prepping their garden. Along with all of these, I have been recently an avid volunteer for the local Arboretum. I am a part of the United Way Youth Division committee, and helped create a project that started helping other agencies to begin recycling and we help pick it up and dispose of it properly. But all of this can only do so much, especially for an area that doesn't see the results. So that is why I am going to attend A&M University of Galveston, and major in Marine Biology, so that I can teach young generations on how the ocean is an important biome that we must protect, to people who live so close to it and understand their full impact on the ocean.