

Short Essay: Human Impacts on Watersheds

Directions: Write an answer to each of the questions below.

Questions

1. A message stenciled on the side of the road by a storm drain says “No Dumping of Chemicals: Drains to Ocean.” How can chemicals dumped on the street in the middle of the city affect the ocean?
2. What would happen to groundwater supplies if they were being withdrawn faster than they were replenished?
3. What are non-native plants and animals, and how do they affect a watershed’s ecosystems?

Answers

1. Any material on the ground surface can be picked up by runoff and make its way to a local body of water, such as the ocean. Even if it goes into a river first, that river will eventually drain to the ocean.
2. If we use groundwater faster than the water cycle can replenish it, we simply run out of it. People who depend on groundwater for drinking water will have their wells “run dry.”
3. A non-native plant or animal is a species that does not naturally live in an area and which usually has no natural predators in its non-native environment. It can disrupt local ecosystems by eating other animals to the point of extinction.