

Protecting and Managing the Enviroment - Task

Salinity

- A) What is the problem?
- B) Why is it a problem?
- C) What can we do about it?

BACKGROUND

Salinity is when rain falls in flat or hot areas and the salt in the water can't escape to the sea. It will occur in flat areas because it will rain and sink into the earth. If there is no hill for a run off the all the water gets trapped in the ground. If the water can't escape then the salt can't get away either. This builds up over a long period of time.

It can often happen in hot areas because when it rain the wat er does not get enough time to run off before it is evaporated. Then the salt is left in the sand again and it will build up over long periods of time.

Once the trees have adapted to the salty environment then the salty ground relies on the trees too. The trees begin to absorb the salt with

water. If the trees were to be removed then the salt would build up and just get out of control.

A) What is the problem?

The main problem is that we have salt in our soil. Trees have adapted to this soil and absorb some of it. We need to keep the balance of how much goes into the soil and how much comes out through trees. If humans increase the salt in the soil too much then all life will die. Trees can adapt to a change of balance but they need thousands of years to adapt. The trees will not be able to adapt to a sudden change overnight.

There is about twenty nine million hectares of naturally salty land. Salt marshes, salt lakes and salt flats cover fourteen million hectares.

Human activities will change the properties of the soil. This will change the water balance of a catchment, an example is when irrigation goes into the soil.

B) Why is it a problem?

It is potentially one of the biggest problems ever known to man. If we do increase the salinity of the soil then everything will die. It would in effect be the same as wiping out the sun. All trees, grass, shrubs etc. will die followed by the plant eating animals and then the meat eating animals will follow. This means humans are now extinct.

C) What can we do about it?

There is no total cure at the moment but there are a couple of things that we can do to help the problem. One of those is to plant lots of deep rooted trees and try to flush out the soil. If we don't have enough trees then the soil will become too moist and kill the trees. There are many different theories on how to solve the salinity problem but there need to be an agreement on one of the theories by every body.

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