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IS WATER CONSERVATION IMPORTANT TO PEOPLE WHO DO NOT LIVE ON A BEACH OR ON THE COAST? WHY OR WHY NOT? WHAT CAN PEOPLE DO TO HELP KEEP OUR OCEANS CLEAN AND HEALTHY?

Climate change is a hard issue to solve, and it affects everyone whether they know it or not. Environmental changes are not always easy to spot. Most of the effects humans have are within the chemical makeup in our atmosphere or in the ocean. As someone who lives in a landlocked state, it is sometimes difficult to notice changes. Some people might not understand the impact of a piece of trash on the ground but it is this thinking that adds to our impact.

Water conservation is important to everyone. Little pieces of trash and water bottles find their way into waterways. This effects the biodiversity of the water as various fish mistake plastic for food and die of the consequences. Polluted waterways eventually flow into the ocean. It might not seem like it, but every action impacts the environment. Any attempts to stop plastic use helps our oceans stay clean. As plastic drifts around, it is broken up into smaller and smaller pieces until it becomes microplastic. Fish filter this through their gills which affects their health. Sometimes plastic even ends up in their stomachs, affecting the food we eat. Saying no to straws and using reusable options helps prevent this from happening in the future. Driving a car everywhere and going on long drives also effects the environment by burning fossil fuels, releasing them into the atmosphere. Normally, these would protect the earth from the sun's harmful radiation, but when adding more, it adds to global warming. If we continue like this, clean water will be harder to obtain. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, only

1.2 percent of surface water is freshwater. With so little access to freshwater, scientists had to invent desalination plants. The three main issues that arise are: 1) they are expensive which is unobtainable for low income and developing countries, 2) they are dependent on fossil fuels, requiring sustainable energy options to be found, 3) they affect wildlife. The last issue affects biodiversity in nearby aquatic communities.

Despite living far away from oceans, there are many actions that make a difference. The obvious first is shorter showers. Next is communities that switch to reusable options. Sustainable skincare and cleaning options are a great start. Many companies make biodegradable soaps and packaging which keeps oceans clean. All these things, when done, would help avoid effects of global warming such as extreme weather. Increased rainfall impacts sewage systems. Since 2015, St. Louis has experienced over 70 sewage overflows. In St. Louis and St. Louis County, the rainwater and sewage pipes are separate. Plans are set to expand capacity to adapt to heavier rainfall, but this is only a temporary fix. Planting trees to collect rainwater is a way to help. The coordinator of clean water policy at the Missouri Coalition for the Environment states that St. Louis "needs a more comprehensive approach to climate resiliency such as using rain gardens... to divert rain water away from sewer systems."

By making little changes, cities would not need to constantly adapt. Instead, people could focus on long term geoengineering to help the environment recover. These problems are an inspiration to many. Educational programs are needed to engage current generations, lest we leave behind irreparable consequences. It takes a collective to make a change. In the words of Greta Thunberg, "The climate crisis has already been solved. We already have all the facts and solutions. All we have to do is wake up and change." Sir David Attenborough has spent his life studying animals, advocating against climate change, and educating people on how much change in wildlife he has seen throughout his life. He has witnessed this firsthand and his documentaries and novels inspire many. In his words, "The natural world is fading, the evidence is all around... (but) if we act now, we can yet put it right."