

“What Does a Tree Do for Me?”

-2020 NRCS Speech Contest-

Did you know, that one acre of trees can absorb the same amount of carbon dioxide that is emitted when driving the average vehicle for 26,000 miles?

Hi, my name is Taylor Storbakken and I am currently a junior at the Britton-Hecla High School. I live in Veblen, South Dakota and am part of the Marshall County Conservation District.

Today I will be informing you about the beauty of trees and how they impact each and every one of our lives. Today I will be telling you about how trees affect our natural resources, the challenges trees face, and what we can do to help.

There are numerous benefits of trees. Many of which you can probably think of off the top of your head. Including shade, providing oxygen and removing carbon dioxide from the air, and holding the soil in place. The list goes on and on. Trees have a large impact on our ecosystem and the natural resources within it. Our natural resources include, air, soil, water, plants, and animals.

First off, trees provide us with clean **air** through a cycle that is known as the oxygen-carbon dioxide cycle, during which trees take in carbon dioxide and release oxygen, which is what we need to breath. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture one acre of trees can absorb 6 tons of carbon dioxide and release about 4 tons of oxygen. This is enough to meet the needs of 18 people annually.

Since trees remove carbon this helps to reduce the effects of global warming. Currently there are extremely high levels of carbon dioxide in the air due to the burning of fossil fuels, such as coal, oil, and natural gases. Planting trees can assist in removing the excess carbon dioxide.

Trees also support healthy **soil**. Tree roots work to hold soil in place, reducing the risk of soil being worn away by running water through a process known as erosion.

Tree's roots also improve **water** quality. Planting trees, especially alongside water sources will help to decrease the risk of erosion and runoff of harmful chemicals into our watershed. Tree roots act as filters by absorbing water and naturally removing pollutants. According to an article written by a professor at Cornell University a healthy 100-foot-tall trees can take in 11,000 gallons of water in only one single growing season. This means that in areas where trees are heavily populated the risk of flooding is much lower, since trees roots work to absorb water and remove excess water from the surface.

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And lastly are **animals**, a single tree can be a home to many different species. Since numerous species are at risk of extinction, living space for biodiversity is important.

There are so many things that trees do to benefit our natural resources. You might be thinking, how does this affect me? When our natural resources are healthy, we in return also benefit, because we need clean air, soil, water, and animals to live a healthy and sustainable life.

Along with the beauty of trees comes many challenges. Many trees are being harmed by invasive insects and diseases. For example: The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) is a highly invasive insect that attacks and can eventually kill species of the North American ash trees.

According to the Marshall County Journal, the city of Britton where I attend school has about 860 ash trees located on city property. All of which will be removed within the next 4-6 years due to this disease.

According to National Geographic's, it is predicted that in total about 10 billion trees are lost on earth every year due to forest fires, deforestation, or diseases.

With that being said, there is a lot of work that needs to be done in order to restore our wooden areas. Trees are incredibly important, and we need to preserve them for generations to come. There are many things that we can do to keep our planet thriving.

One thing we can do is to try to go paper less. Also, make sure to recycle. The less paper we use and the more we recycle the less trees that need to be destroyed. It's as simple as that.

Lastly, is planting trees. Whether we plant trees at our homes, schools, churches, and communities, planting a tree is a simple act that can create an impact on ourselves, our natural resources, and our planet.

In conclusion, today I have explained to you what trees do for us. I've explained how they affect our natural resources, challenges that trees face, and what we can do to help.

The simple fact is this: We need trees. We need trees because they protect our natural resources. They protect the air WE breathe, the soil WE walk on, the water WE drink, and the plants and animals that WE need to live, and THAT is what a tree does for me.

Thank you.

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