

The Dead Zone

The Dead Zone... the name itself sounds ominous enough, but when you learn the true consequences it seems even worse. Dead zones cause the death of hundreds of thousands of organisms, along with the demise of the economy of thousands of fisherman along the southern United States coast, who depend on those waters for their income. There are dead zones all over the world, but the one in question today is one of the largest of those. It lies along the coast of the Southern United States, in the Gulf of Mexico, near the Mississippi River Delta.

This Dead zone is massive, sometimes covering over 7,000 square miles. They happen when nutrient laden waters enter the ocean from the Mississippi river. This water is less dense than the salty ocean water, and so, when it sits on top of the ocean with all of the nutrients from the runoff of the millions of farms in the Mississippi River Watershed, it begins to form algae. These Algae grow on top of the saltwater, and prevent oxygen from getting through the thick layer into the bottom layer of saltwater. Also, when it dies it sinks down, and as it's decomposing it absorbs what oxygen is in the water, lowering the oxygen levels dangerously low. So low, in fact, that everything that is currently living in those waters either leave to find better living areas, or die if they can't move quick enough. Some of the more common things to die are Crabs, and small shelled creatures on the ocean floor, while fish and other things that can move, go to different areas. This causes fishermen on the southern coast to lose their entire jobs, and a large part of the economy down south has become stagnant.

If farmers in the Mississippi River Watershed (and all over the world) can become more conscious about what fertilizers they put on their land, then it will help reduce the size and lethality of the Dead Zone, and increase the chance of people drinking safe water. Unsafe drinking water in the

Midwest is another problem caused by over usage of nitrogen fertilizers, too much nitrogen in the bloodstream can cause the 'Blue-baby syndrome' that people fear so much.

The Dead zone is reversible, and it would be so easy for farmers across the nation to become more conscious about how they are treating the soil. However, if the trend of ignorance continues, then the dead zone will continue to get larger and larger, hampering the economy, and the beauty of the Gulf of Mexico.