Humans interact with the world around us everyday, but some of our activities are more harmful than others. As our population approaches 7 billion people, the effects of human activities on the ecosystem, including the water, air, land, and the life that we share the world with, are almost immeasurable.

POLLUTION

Humans pollute the land, water and air with unwanted refuse. Almost 2.4 billion people don’t access to clean water. Humans produce about 300 million tons of plastic each year. More than 8 million tons of that plastic are dumped into the oceans, and in 2017, an estimated 5 trillion pieces of plastic littered the seas. The plastic in oceans have devastating effects on wildlife. In 2017, for example, a bleached whale discovered off the coast of Scotland died because of the pounds of plastic it had consumed. About nine pounds of plastic bags were found coiled in its digestive tracts.

GLOBAL WARMING

Environmental scientists have been warning us for decades that the CO2 emissions that come from burning fossil fuels are affecting the planets ecosystem. The increase of CO2 in the atmosphere traps heat that would otherwise escape into space. This has caused Artic ice and glaciers to melt and raise ocean levels. The loss of reflective ice and increase in water, which absorbs heat, adds to the rising temperatures in a cycle that is predicted to cause ocean levels to rise 1 to 4 feet by 2100.

GENETIC MODIFICATION

The use of genetic modified organisms, or GMOs, has played an important role in increasing crop yields so we can feed our populations. In addition to providing better crop yields, modified plants are better able to resist disease and parasites, tolerate more extreme temperatures, or thrive with less water. However, modifying plants has not always been intentional. For example, continued use of herbicides, like glyphosphate, has caused many weeds to become immune to their effects. Infact 249 species of weeds are now immune to all of them is to till the soil, which exposes the soil to sunlight and kills the organisms that help make the land fertile.

DEFORESTATION

For every corn field you see, chances are good there was once a forest in its place. As our population continues to increase, humans create more larger farms, which means removing the dwindling number of forests. Forests are also cleared for the lumber that we sue to build our houses and to make room for our house. About 18 million acres of trees acres of trees are clear-cut every year for wood. This has devastating effects for the wildlife that once called those forests home.

POSITIVE EFFECTS ON HUMAN ACTIVITIES

Not all the ways that humans affect the ecosystem are negative. Evert time you recycle use paper, plastic or metal, or pick up a piece of trash from the side walk, you have a positive impacts on the environment .Others are committing their time and energy to large projects to positively change the ecosystem. In 2011, for example, a 16 year old inventor named Boyan Slat, created a device that can sweep the plastic from the ocean. He later founded. The ocean cleanup project to begin putting that technology to use. It could clean up half the plastic currently in the Great Pacific Garbage Patch in five years.