

the ocean when they get the wrong message for shipping and other uses. We know that just how important it is to protect lakes, rivers, estuaries, and coastlines! Unfortunately, for many waterways are clogged with pollution such as pesticide runoff, sewage, and plastics (especially the single-use kind). All this pollution doesn't just make our habitat unpleasant, it leads to a decline in the health of the whole world's ecosystem!

Ocean acid is the ocean, we're also challenged by ocean acidification. One way it occurs is when excess carbon dioxide from the air is absorbed by the water. The subsequent chemical reaction makes the ocean more acidic. This isn't good for any of us sea creatures – but it's especially bad for coral, shellfish, and fish, because the acidity directly impedes growth. Low fat harvests are correlated with more acidic water (source NOAA).

Ocean acidification can also happen through the process of eutrophication. Food, pollutants like sewage, nitrous, and even fertilizer end up in waterways. Since these contaminants are in such excessive amounts, they ultimately increase water acidity. Ocean acidification can be easy to forget about, since it's invisible. But it's still a significant issue!

These problems have caused adverse changes in our watery habitat, and it can be hard for us sea creatures to adapt. In fact, extinction rates of marine species are increasing (source NOAA).

While progress has been made toward alleviating these problems, more should be done. You can do your part – whether you have helping hands, or helping from the rear! We can reverse the trend of ecosystem decline by better protecting lakes, rivers, estuaries, and coastlines, and creating the ones that are already protected. Minimizing the use of fertilizers will help reduce ocean acidification; likewise, we can all opt to recycle more and reduce single use plastics. Anything to minimize pollution will benefit waterways. Even helping in ways that might seem "small" can add up to making a big impact!

Everything in nature is connected like a web. So, protecting lakes, rivers, estuaries, and coastlines is essential for protecting the entire ecosystem.