

Great Lakes? Not for Long



Leigh Haeger

Map of Great Lakes

The Great Lakes help quench the thirst of 40 million people in the United States and Canada. But this pool of resources may not be around for long. The Great Lakes are in trouble.

A team of scientists recently released a report about the Great Lakes' **dire**¹ state. The lakes are threatened by toxic substances, over fishing, **invasive species**,² air pollution, and loss of habitat for wildlife. "The Great Lakes are under tremendous stress," Alfred Beeton of the University of Michigan told reporters.

The report says that concentrating on one or two of the issues won't wave good-bye to the problems. Instead, the scientists wrote, the government needs to look at the entire Great Lakes **ecosystem**. An ecosystem is a community of living things and its environment.

Scientists asked Congress for \$20 billion to help protect the lakes. Experts say the money would be used to clean polluted harbors. Scientists also want to restore **wetlands**, such as marshes and swamps. Because wetlands hold moisture and prevent erosion, they could help the lakes heal themselves.

Something must be done fast, warns Andy Buchsbaum of the National Wildlife Federation. If not, "the damage is likely to be irreversible," he says.

¹ **dire**: warning of disaster

² **invasive species**: plants or animals that spread quickly and damage other plants and animals

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Which one of the following is NOT causing a problem in the Great Lakes?

- A too much rain
- B air pollution
- C toxic substances
- D invasive species

2. Read this sentence from the passage: "Because wetlands hold moisture and prevent erosion, they could help the lakes heal themselves."

Which of the following describes the relationship between the first and second part of the sentence?

- A They are two steps in sequence.
- B The sentence compares two facts about the Great Lakes.
- C The sentence includes both the cause and describes its effect.
- D The sentence lists the different parts of the wetlands.

3. Read the following sentence from the passage: "The report says that concentrating on one or two of the issues won't wave good-bye to the problems."

What might you conclude from that sentence?

- A Scientist should raise more money to solve these problems because they are expensive.
- B Scientists must focus on the entire ecosystem to solve the problems in the Great Lakes.
- C The harbors of the Great Lakes must be treated and cleaned thoroughly to solve the problem.
- D The Great Lakes have been under a great deal of stress from pollution and overfishing.

4. Read the following sentence: "The Great Lakes help quench the thirst of 40 million people in the United States and Canada."

In this sentence the word **quench** means

- A to satisfy
- B to cause
- C to increase
- D to heal

5. The primary purpose of this passage is to
- A describe how the Great Lakes are being threatened and explain what scientists are doing to protect them
 - B compare and contrast the pollutants and fisheries that are polluting the Great Lakes
 - C explain why millions of dollars will not be enough to focus on the entire ecosystem of the Great Lakes
 - D describe how the government must care for ecosystems across the country with large amounts of funding

6. Why do scientists want to restore wetlands, such as marshes and swamps?

7. What might happen if scientists do not soon find a way to clean and protect the Great Lakes? Cite evidence from the text to support your answer.

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

The Great Lakes are under tremendous stress _____ the loss of habitat for wildlife, invasive species, excessive fishing, toxic substances, and air pollution.

- A but
- B although
- C from
- D nearly

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

Recently, scientists found that the Great Lakes are under tremendous stress because of several factors that are causing pollution.

Who? scientists

(did) What? _____

When? _____

Why? _____

10. **Vocabulary Word:** dire: warning of disaster

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: answers may vary.
