

THE PROBLEMS OF THE BLACK SEA

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The Black Sea is a very unique body of water. Only six countries surround it, however the catchment area is over five times larger than the sea and has a population of over 170 million people that live in 21 countries. We can easily see that an environmental problem cannot be considered only a separate problem of one country alone. For example, the polluted water released by industry in Hungary will travel down the Danube to the sea and be carried by currents into waters fished by Ukrainian fishing boats. At the same way pollution from the Dnipro can affect the quality of water on the beaches and resorts of Romania and Bulgaria. The Black Sea is an internationally important area for fishing and also tourism. Almost 40 million people visit the coast every summer. The average depth of the Black Sea is about 1250 meters.

Large quantities of pollution enter the Black Sea through the Danube and Dnipro rivers. The amount of metals in waters around some beaches is dangerously high. But the most serious problem is lack of oxygen in the water. Chemicals from agriculture, industry, and home waste water cause large increases in microscopic plant pollutions. When these plants die and start to rot, they use up all the oxygen and die. This is happening in most of the Black Sea. In 1970 there were 26 different kinds of fish that the fishermen can catch, and they are all small fish. Thirty years ago the sun could shine through 60 meters of clear water. Now the water is clear for only 10 to 30 meters. The normal ecological balance has been distributed. Having so many microscopic plants as food, the number of jellyfish has exploded throughout the sea. Because swimming in water with many jellyfish is not very pleasant, the tourism economy is negatively affected. Solving these environmental problems will require international cooperation and much effort. International environmental agreements need to be made that require that polluted water can be cleaned before it is let into rivers that flow to the sea and also that limit the amount of fish that are caught.

As a result of last year accidents in the Black Sea the problem has become even graver.

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