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Editorial

Note on Soil Contamination

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Editorial

Soil contamination or soil pollution as part of land degradation is caused by the presence of xenobiotics (human-made) chemicals or other alteration in the natural soil environment. It is typically caused by industrial activity, agricultural chemicals or improper disposal of waste. Contamination is correlated with the degree of industrialization and intensity of chemical substance. The most common chemicals involved are petroleum hydrocarbons, solvents, pesticides, lead, and other heavy metals.

Any activity that leads to other forms of soil degradation (erosion, compaction, etc.) may indirectly worsen the contamination effects in that soil remediation becomes more tedious. Contaminated or polluted soil directly affects human health through direct contact with soil or via inhalation of soil contaminants which have vaporized; Not unexpectedly, soil contaminants can have significant deleterious consequences for ecosystems. There are radical soil chemistry changes which can arise from the presence of many hazardous chemicals even at low concentration of the contaminant species.

Effects occur to agricultural lands which have certain types of soil contamination. Contaminants typically alter plant metabolism, often causing a reduction in crop yields. This has a secondary effect upon soil conservation, since the languishing crops cannot shield the Earth's soil from erosion. Some of these chemical contaminants have long half-lives and in other cases derivative chemicals are formed from decay of primary soil contaminants.

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