

Summary: Resources of the United States

A Land of Rich Resources

Natural resources are things from the natural environment that people use. The first Americans used natural resources, such as water, soil, plants, and animals. Food, clothing, houses, and fuel all come from natural resources. Trees and other living things are renewable resources. Soil is renewable if it is used carefully. Minerals like copper and iron are nonrenewable resources. They were formed over millions of years. Once we use them up, they will be gone forever. Sunlight, wind, and water are flow resources. We can use their energy as they move through the environment.

Using Natural Resources

Rich soil covers much of the land in the United States. People use soil to raise crops and livestock. There are great forests in North America. People cut trees to make wood and paper products. The oceans are a source of seafood. Rivers provide transportation routes and their flow generates power. We use water for drinking and farming.

Miners dig for mineral resources, such as metals and stone. People use natural resources to make energy. We use energy for electricity, heat, and transportation. Most of our energy comes from burning fossil fuels, such as coal, oil, and natural gas. The United States produces much of the world's fossil fuels. It also uses more fuel than any other country. Fossil fuels are nonrenewable resources.

Using Resources Wisely

People are finding other energy resources. The sun's power and heat from within the earth are used to make energy. Wind and water are used to make electricity. Nuclear energy uses natural resources, but it causes safety problems.

People do not always use natural resources wisely. People dump waste into water, burn fuels that harm the air, cut too many trees, and take too many fish. You can help to protect natural resources by using less energy and recycling.

Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

natural resources *noun*, things from the natural environment that people use

renewable resources *noun*, things that the environment can replace after we use them

nonrenewable resources *noun*, things nature cannot replace after we use them

product *noun*, something that is made from natural resources

fossil fuel *noun*, an energy source formed by the remains of things that lived long ago

After You Read

REVIEW **What is a natural resource?** Highlight the sentence that tells the answer.

REVIEW **Why are natural resources important to the people of the United States?** Highlight ways that people in the United States use natural resources.

REVIEW **How can you help protect natural resources?** Circle the sentence that tells what you can do to protect natural resources.