

# Confronting threats to clean water

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Despite the abundance of water on our planet, it remains a precious and sought after life-sustaining resource. Without the technology to provide safe, clean water to the masses, the general public would be consuming massive amounts of deadly bacteria daily. This is a case of the natural environment endangering humans. However, this can go both ways. Every year humans endanger the lives of millions of marine animals by (accidentally) contaminating their water with oil. Oil spills dump thousands of tons of oil into the ocean every year affecting many species of animals.

Two recently published articles in *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development* give insight into these two similar situations. They focus on the issue of [water contamination](#); however, one addresses the implications on humans and the second focuses on the marine environment. You can access these articles for free until December 31, 2013.

"Access to Safe Water: A paradox in developed nations," unveils the complex process currently in place to provide safe drinking water in developed nations. This article focuses on combating the common public idea that water is a "throwaway" commodity. Developed nations need to shift their perspective about safe water; it is not a commodity but a necessity. Educating the public can lead to better [water](#) management and other positive practices.

The second article, "Oil Pollution in the Marine Environment: Inputs, Big Spills, Small Spills, and Dribbles," discusses how [oil spills](#) (natural or

human induced) affect the marine environment.

An important point in the article touched on petroleum composition. It is important to note because each component has different properties. For example, "When we ask questions about the fate and effects of an oil spill or other oil inputs, we are asking questions about the fate and effects of a complex mixture of different hydrocarbons... nitrogen, oxygen, and sulfur containing material... even some small amounts of metals." Understanding this will help explain the effects different inputs of oil have on marine environment.

The author notes the different kinds of oil inputs, natural and human induced, and makes geographical comparisons of these inputs. He concludes how, as a result of humans' personal and corrective use of oil, we must "...adequately address the impacts of oil on the [marine environment](#)". In other words, we must expand our knowledge of the problem in order to correctly rectify it.

**More information:** [www.tandfonline.com/toc/venv20...current#.UoIJGvmTzfi](http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/venv20...current#.UoIJGvmTzfi)

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