**Geography Terms Reading:** What is it? Why is it important? **Due** Tue 4/15

Read about the following geography terms. In writing, explain what each terms means and why it’s important.

**Deforestation** is the clearance or removal of trees from a forest. Why do we modify the earth in this way? We kill trees to make our lives better. We can use the wood as resource to make paper, to burn and create energy, to build homes, and many other reasons. When we clear a forest we create a place to live. Think about how much money can be made by clearing a forest and building 100 homes. The average home price in the US is $150,000. We can also build stores or factories. Stores and factories create jobs and increase the wealth of a nation.

Economically speaking, it seems that we should chop down every forest in the world. Environmentally speaking, that is a horrible idea. Trees clean our air by absorbing Carbon dioxide and producing the oxygen we need to breathe. Trees also provide a suitable habit for thousands of animals and organisms. Without forests, many of these organisms would die and the food chain would be drastically altered.

**Pollution** is the introduction of contaminants into the natural environment that causes adverse change. Why do we do this? Mankind and animals have been doing this since the first human walked the earth. Think of cavemen sitting around a campfire. The wood that they are burning is releasing pollution into the atmosphere. The cavemen aren’t polluting because they hate the earth; they need warmth to survive and to cook meals. Pollution is and has always been the result of humans attempting to make their lives better.

Today, we heat our homes, cook our meals, and drive to school; all of these tasks create pollution. The big question is how much do we pollute? Is it too much? Can we change are ways or do we even need to change our ways?

**Erosion** is the process by which soil and rock are removed from the Earth's surface. Every time wind and water come into contact with land a very small portion of land is damaged. Over a long enough time, the land is completely destroyed. Erosion happens naturally via wind and water, but humans accelerate the process. Industrial agriculture, deforestation, climate change and urban sprawl are the human actions that expedite erosion.

If erosion continues at its current alarming rate without human intervention, then the world we be a less hospitable place. Humans will have trouble raising food, natural disasters will occur more often and be more severe, and our climate may be altered in a way that humans may not be able to live.

**Depopulation** is the reduction of people living in a region. This is the result of people dying or moving. Depopulation occurs because of various push factors in migration (disease, lack of jobs, lack of education, lack of freedom, etc.). When less people live in an area, that area goes through a period of decline. The people that stay in a depopulated area have access to less resources and opportunities. Some areas die and become completely abandoned.

**Climate Change** is the scientific theory that human beings are affecting our climate (temperature, humidity, atmospheric pressure, wind, precipitation, etc.). Climate change is caused by the burning of fossil fuels (coal, petroleum, and natural gas). Humans must burn fossil fuels to power a society. Fossil fuels have been instrumental in the advancement of mankind. Unfortunately, the more fossil fuels we burn, then the more carbon dioxide that is released into the atmosphere. What should we do?

**Glaciation** is a period of time in which the Earth is cooler and more of the Earth’s surface is covered by glaciers. Agriculture is not easily grown when the planet’s temperature is too cold. Glaciation has occurred multiple times over the lifespan of Earth. The last glaciation ended 18,000 years ago when cavemen walked the Earth. Another glaciation will occur again. Some scientists believe that another glaciation is 55,000 years away; others believe that climate change will bring glaciation much sooner.

**Desertification** is a type of land degradation in which a region becomes increasingly arid (dry), and loses vegetation and wildlife. It is caused by climate change and human activities (over farming). Basically, taking normal land and turning it into a desert. As more land becomes deserts, less food will grow. This will result in starvation and death. Also, when farm land becomes useless, then people must migrate to new area. As societies separate and move to new areas, culture and history can be forgotten or lost. Urbanization increases and pollution increases. Desertification is not a new trend, but it is becoming more severe and a threat to mankind.