

On April 2010, a semi-submersible exploratory offshore drilling rig owned by BP in the Gulf of Mexico exploded, damaging a deep sea wellhead. The resulting oil spill, which continues to spill an estimated thirty-five thousand to sixty thousand barrels of oil each day, has been deemed the largest offshore oil spill in United States' history. As images surfaced of the marine wildlife affected by the disaster, as well as the sheer magnitude of the area affected, a national outcry against BP's unpreparedness of a working contingency plan as well as the realization of the fragility of the environment and the impact of our actions. While the increase in environmental awareness is certainly welcome, it signals the large-scale mentality associated with environmental protection.

We learn about the food chain at a very early age, the notion of a hierarchal organization based on how different animals in an ecosystem depend on each other to survive. We also learn how the removal of a particular link in the chain can affect others connected to it. A basic example of this is involves whales, who feed on shrill, who in turn feed on phytoplankton. By removing phytoplankton from the chain, whales are ultimately affected. The principle of the food chain can also be applied to protecting the environment. We cannot protect the environment by only focusing on the ecosystem or the larger, more noticeable animals inhabiting them.

Rather, we have to start at a grass roots level, taking it upon ourselves to make small changes in our daily lifestyle. It is important to remember that the Earth's resources are constant, a fact we often forget living in developed countries. Water flows freely from our faucets, and electricity is always available as long as you have an extra socket. The truth of the matter however is that the resources we consume must come from a source, often times far removed from where we live. The energy and resources needed to transport resources to us invariably come from the use of fossil fuels. And while the idea of saving a piece of paper or using less water to wash your dishes to protect the environment may seem consequential, if we consider the number of individuals living on the earth doing so, the number of trees or resources we save may not seem so inconsequential after all.