

Environmental History Overview

Our Timeline

- Earth has existed for an estimated 4.6 billion yrs.
- Homo sapiens have been on earth only about 60,000 yrs.
- Until about 12,000 yrs ago, men were mostly hunter-gatherers.

Hunter-Gatherers: 60,000 yrs ago

- Had only three energy sources:
 - Sunlight in captured plants
 - Fire
 - Their own muscle power
- Very little impact on environment



The Makah butcher a whale (c.1905-1910)
Washington State Historical Society

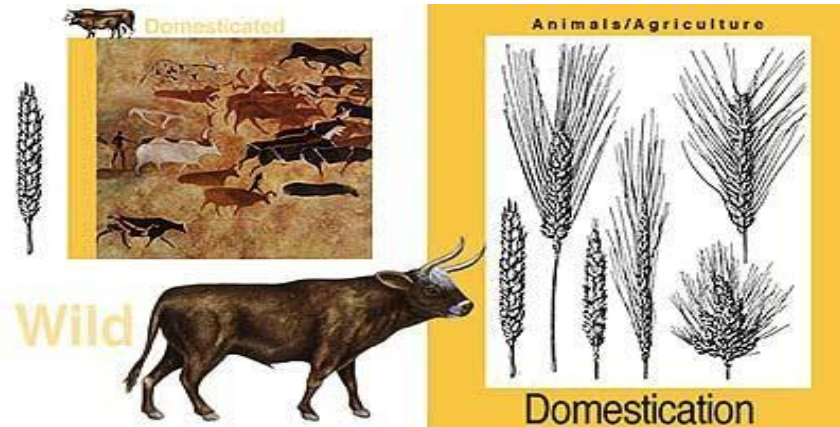
Agricultural Revolution: 12,000 yrs ago

- **Agricultural Revolution**

- Cultural shift that began in several regions of the world
- Involved a gradual move from a lifestyle based on nomadic hunting

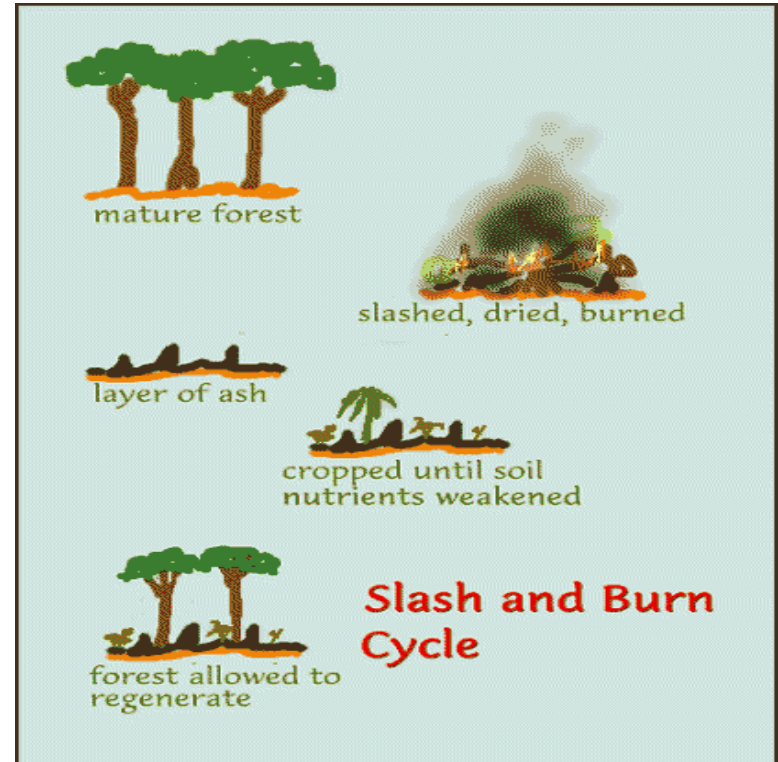
- **Agro-forestry**

- Planting a mixture of crops and tree crops



Agricultural Revolution

- **Slash-and-burn**
 - Cutting down vegetation, then burning underbrush to clear small patches of land
 - Ash enriches soil
- **Subsistence Farming**
 - Grew only enough food to feed selves
- **Sustainable Cultivation**
 - Little mechanization
 - Low population density





Industrial Revolution: 275 yrs ago

- Switched from small-scale localized production to large-scale production of machine-made goods
- Steam engines; coal instead of wood
- Movement from rural to cities--often very bad living and working conditions
- Results:
 - Fossil-fuel powered farm machinery
 - New plant-breeding techniques increase yield per acre
 - More reliable food supply
 - Longer life spans
 - Increase in population size



Information & Globalization Revolution:

40 yrs ago

- New technologies – telephone, computers, tv, etc
- Automated data bases
- Remote sensing satellites
- STILL ON-GOING!!!



Information & Globalization Revolution: 40 yrs ago

- **Advantages**

- Helps us understand earth, economics, etc.
- Allows use of remote sensing satellites
- Enables use to develop computer models
- Can reduce pollution and environmental degradation

- **Disadvantages**

- Information overload
- Confusion and a sense of hopelessness
- Increases environmental degradation
- Decrease in cultural diversity

US Environmental Eras

- **Tribal Era**
 - Occupied by indigenous people, called Indians – now called Native Americans
 - Had a fairly low environmental impact
- **Frontier Era (1607-1890)**
 - Began with European colonists settling North America
 - FRONTIER ENVIRONMENTAL WORLDVIEW:
wilderness there to be conquered and cleared; kill the dangerous animals and Native Americans



US Environmental Eras

- **Early Conservation Era (1832-1960)**
 - Increased awareness of human impacts on environment
 - Introduction of basic government interventions: parks, policies, influence
 - Preservation vs. conservation
- **Environmental Era (1960-2004)**
 - Call for people to live with no more impact than other species
 - Increased environmental regulations