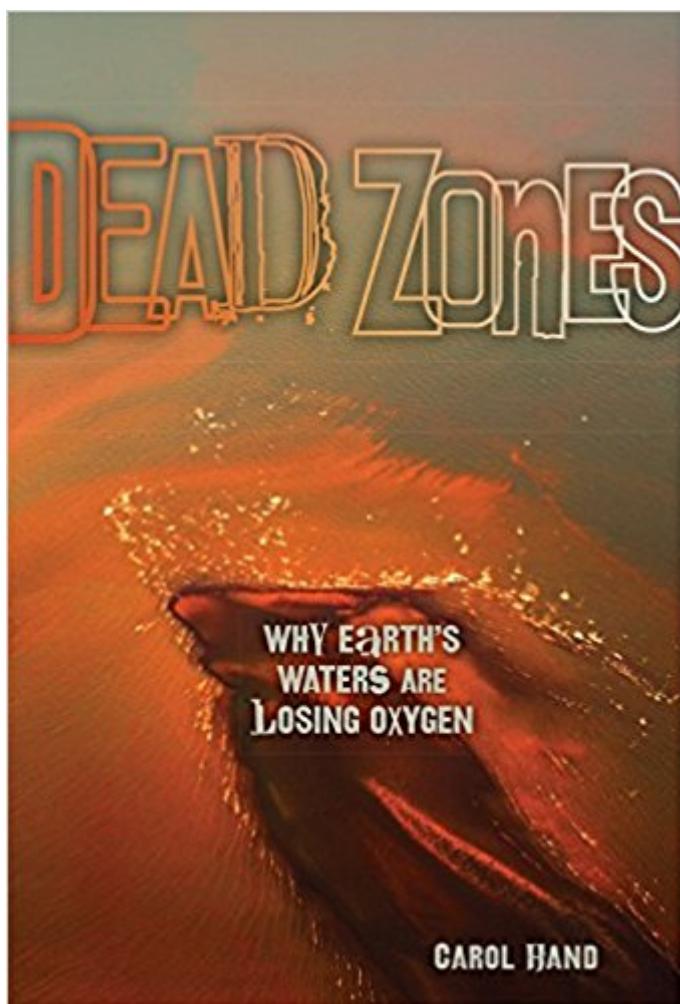


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Dead Zones: Why Earth's Waters Are Losing Oxygen



Synopsis

Times are tough for shrimpers and fishers in the Gulf of Mexico. The animals they rely on for their livelihood are harder to find. Every summer a dead zone— a region of low oxygen— emerges in the waters along the Gulf Coast. Where oxygen is low, fish and other animals cannot survive. Currently the world has more than 400 identified dead zones, up dramatically from the 49 dead zones identified in the 1960's. The good news is that people can eliminate dead zones by changing agricultural practices and reducing pollution. Using real-world examples, this book looks at the impact of pollution on global water resources, and discusses the interconnectedness of ecosystems and organisms.

Book Information

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Gr 6-8— "When healthy, the Gulf floor teems with many kinds of life, but in a dead zone, it is covered with grayish-black, foul-smelling goo." Highlighting one of the more insidious by-products of environmental pollution, Hand explains how fertilizer runoff can result in algal blooms far downstream that leave huge areas of fresh or salt water so hypoxic—or low in oxygen—that only anaerobic bacteria can survive. Though noting that the Baltic contains seven of the world's 10 largest "dead zones," she focuses mainly on the Gulf of Mexico, where problems caused by such runoff (exacerbated both by local oil spills and by federal programs that encourage Midwestern farmers to grow more corn to convert to ethanol) have sharply affected the fishing and shrimp industries. While the author examines some successful reclamation efforts—notably Boston Harbor and on a larger scale the Black Sea—she doesn't point

to simple or easy remedies for this growing blight, either. The cramped photos and maps, along with the narrative's tiny type size, give this study a utilitarian look, but the book covers a worrisome topic in more detail than readers will find elsewhere and also offers generous quantities of print and web resources for further research. VERDICT A significant overview for serious eco-activists or any students interested in our planet's oceans and waterways. •John Peters, Children's Literature Consultant, New York City

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