

Distribution of Earth's Resources

There are many resources unevenly distributed on Earth due to past and current processes and conditions on Earth. Five of those resources are described below. Read about each resource and answer the questions on your student sheet.

1. **Fertile Soil.** Humans depend on fertile soil for agricultural purposes. Fertile soil is most often found in temperate climates, where temperature is relatively mild and precipitation is relatively high. The most fertile soil is found in the US, India and Europe.

2. **Biodiversity.** Biodiversity is the diversity of life. It is one of Earth's greatest resources because it maintains equilibrium or balance in ecosystems. It is also considered a source of new medications and promotes water and soil quality. Biodiversity is richest in the tropical rainforests. We call these regions "biodiversity hotspots." The largest biodiversity hotspots are found in South America, Africa and Southeast Asia.

3. **Uranium.** Uranium is a naturally radioactive metal found in Earth's crust. It is important to nuclear power. The largest uranium reserves are found in Australia. Large uranium reserves are also found in Kazakhstan, Russia and Canada.

4. **Fossil Fuels.** There are three major fossil fuels: coal, oil and natural gas. Fossil fuels are found deep within Earth. They accumulate in large pools or reserves.

- **Coal** reserves are found where ancient swamps used to be located on Earth. The largest coal reserves are found in the United States, Russia and China.
- **Oil** reserves are found where the remains of marine organisms were buried. The largest oil reserves are found in the Middle East, Canada and Mexico.
- **Natural gas** reserves are often found near oil reserves.

5. **Metals and Minerals.** Many of Earth's metals and minerals are found near tectonic plate boundaries or faults.

- **Gold** is a precious metal most often found near faults and inactive volcanoes. The largest gold reserves are found in the United States and Europe.
- **Diamonds** are minerals. They are often found near ancient volcanoes, specifically in old volcanic pipes that carried magma from inside Earth to Earth's surface. The largest diamond reserves are found in Australia and Africa.