SPEAKING OF THE LAKE

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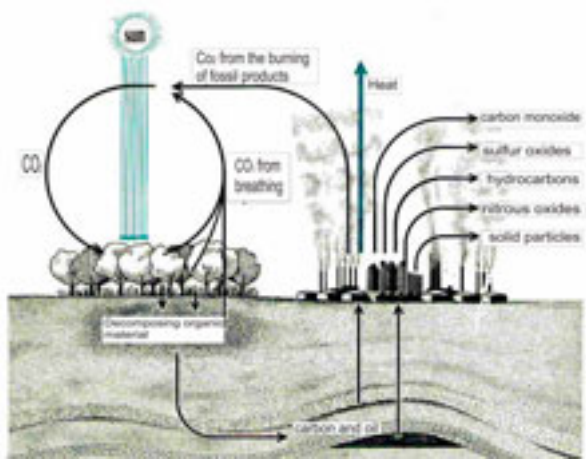

Everyday, busy life, with its worries and concerns about earning our daily livelihoods, sometimes blinds us and stops us from seeing existing relationships between what we do and the environment in which we're developing.

Every little action that we carry out affects, in one way or another, the place in which we live. So it is that, with the passing of time, we experience this so-called "butterfly effect" phenomenon, a concept taken from Ray Bradbury's story called "A Sound of Thunder."

Some of the most damaging actions affecting bodies of fresh water on the planet and the whole ecosystem are the production of energy. The energy produced by conventional means—such as by hydroelectric and nuclear plants—produces discharges that do irreversible damage to nature, principally to bodies of water.

The production of energy requires irreversible use of the natural resources that are at hand,

such as fossil fuels. For instance, when fossil fuels are “burned,” the smoke rises into the atmosphere and carries with it dangerous pollutants such as sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides.

We must also remember that the production of energy in this country is by thermo-electricity, by means of fossil fuels. “In accordance with the National Commission on Saving Energy (CONAE), 72 percent of the electric energy that is consumed in Mexico is obtained by burning fossil fuels, in thermo-electric plants.” These chemicals are deposited in the earth’s surface with the help of the rain. This is the “acid rain” effect. This acid rain arrives in water, and this vital liquid is now changed into a dangerous element for both the environment and for human beings.

Energy production in this country responds to the ever-increasing demands. In other words, the increasing day-to-day demand by the population for more energy has forced the authorities to look for ways to satisfy that demand, which raises the level of energy produced and increases the levels of toxic gasses.

One task that we could carry out, now that Lake Chapala has been declared a Ramsar site, is to change our energy consumption habits in order to reduce the production load and, in that way, reduce discharges.

One specific thing we can do to help ourselves succeed at the objective of conserving energy is to change our light bulbs—the light bulbs in our homes. Using the energy-saving light bulbs now sold in almost all hardware stores, rather than the incandescent bulbs we’re used to, can help greatly to reduce energy use. This savings extends to economic savings for the family: Energy-saving light bulbs consume four times less energy and last ten times longer than conventional incandescent bulbs.

The tangible savings for one family could be between 826 and 1,106 pesos per year and would be a big help in combating water pollution such as the pollution of our Lake Chapala. The impact would be reflected in the quality of life of Lakeside residents, as well as in the development of endemic species of such importance in our wetland.