

THE CARBON CYCLE VOCABULARY

Carbon – a nonmetallic chemical element found in many inorganic compounds and all organic compounds.

Carbon dioxide – a colorless, odorless, incombustible gas, somewhat heavier than air that passes out of the lungs in respiration and is used in plants for photosynthesis.

Greenhouse Effect – the result of excess carbon dioxide in the atmosphere causing global warming.

Hydrocarbons – any compound containing only hydrogen and carbon.

Fast track carbon recycling – the process that begins with photosynthesis in plants and phytoplankton, carries on through the animals, and ends with decomposition of plants, animals, and wastes.

Slow track carbon recycling – carbon trapped in the Earth's crust for thousands and sometimes millions of years. Carbon is returned to the atmosphere by man's mining and drilling for oil and gas.

Carbon sink – an area that absorbs carbon in water or on land and does not recycle.

Organic recyclers – plants and animals.

Inorganic recyclers – the atmosphere and oceans

Geosphere – the Earth's crust

Hydrosphere – water bodies

Biosphere – all living things

Atmosphere – the air surrounding the Earth's crust.