

We know them by names such as Ike, Rita, and Katrina. They sound harmless enough, but they are major hurricanes that damaged the coastal area of Texas as well as other states. They caused millions of dollars of losses, and in my area, we set up shelters to help the evacuated people. Yet, in studying about hurricanes, I have recently learned that they are necessary, and they do have benefits. They are an important connection in the evolution of our earth.

First, these hurricanes provide sometimes as much as 25% of needed rainfall. They replenish the land and the ocean, often changing our coastlines. The U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey measures the coastline frequently, and often sees a change after a major hurricane.

Yet, trying to halt a hurricane through air seedings as an example would be a mistake as the reduction of rainfall could really hinder the farms, industries, or even our amount of drinking water. Secondly, hurricanes help to maintain the earth's heat balance. Hurricanes help to move hot air away from the tropics. If this did not occur, temperatures would become unbearably hot in the tropics. These hurricanes move some of the intense heat from the equator towards the polar regions. As the hurricane is moving this heat, it is also spread out by the ocean currents. Therefore, the storms provide some of our atmospheric heat.

Thirdly, even though the hurricanes change the coastline, they also deposit even more sand on the back of an island, like Galveston Island. This is necessary to keep the island from growing smaller in size.

Thus, as bad as a natural disaster such as a hurricane can be, these huge storms are an important earth connection to provide rain, heat balance, and a good coastal environment.