

SCIENCE, ECOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES, AND SUSTAINABILITY

Chapter 2

Science, Matter, Energy, and Systems

Summary

1. Science is an attempt to discover the natural world's order and use that in describing what is likely to happen in nature. Scientists ask a question or identify a problem to investigate. Then, they collect scientific data through observation and measurement. Experiments may be used to study specific phenomena.
2. The major components of complex systems are environmental inputs, flows within the system, and outputs to the environment.
3. The basic forms of matter are elements and compounds. Matter is useful to us as a resource because it makes up every material substance.
4. The major forms of energy are kinetic energy and potential energy. Energy is useful to us as a resource because it moves matter.
5. The Law of Conservation of Matter states that matter is neither created nor destroyed when a physical or chemical change occurs.
6. Matter can undergo three types of nuclear changes: natural radioactive decay, nuclear fission, and nuclear fusion.
7. The First Law of Thermodynamics states that in all physical and chemical changes, energy may be converted from one form to another but it is neither created nor destroyed. The Second Law of Thermodynamics states that when energy is changed from one form to another, there is always less usable energy left.
8. These laws, then, show that energy goes from a more useful to a less useful form and that high-quality energy cannot be recycled. So, the quality as well as the quantity of our resources and our environment will be reduced.

Key Questions and Concepts

2-1 What do scientists do?

CORE CASE STUDY. Controlled experiments involve an experimental group, in which a known variable is changed, and a control group, in which the variable is not changed. The example involves two drainages that were dammed. One was deforested and one left forested. The deforested landscape showed an increase in erosion and an increase in water flow carrying dissolved nutrients.

- A. Science assumes that events in the natural world follow orderly patterns and that, through observation and experimentation, these patterns can be understood.
- B. The scientific method used to learn about the world.
 1. Identify the problem.
 2. Find out what is known about the problem.
 3. Propose a question.
 4. Collect data.
 5. Suggest a hypothesis (possible explanation).
 6. Make testable projections.
 7. Test with further experiments, models or observations.
 - a. Models are approximate representations of a system.
 8. Support or reject hypothesis.

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Shasha Hu



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