**Discuss the environmental consequences of increasing international demand for one raw material. [15 marks]**

**Introduction** - Demand for oil continues to increase year on year and more recently in the emerging economies of the BRIC’s’(Brazil, Russia, India, China) and (Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria, Turkey) have used oil to fuel their growing economies, booming car ownership and development of materials goods using plastics. However, the biggest user of oil globally remains the USA where demand is currently almost 19 million barrels a day. Huge over reliance on this finite resource has led to oil exploration and modern day voyages of discovery to keep feeding demand and the stability of global economies in the face of dwindling supplies. The Middle East and Canada are where the vast majority of the remaining oil is found and the logistics of drilling for and transporting oil can lead to environmental conflict, particularly when accidents happen. The last major accident was off the coast of southern Alaska in 1989 when the Exxon Valdez ran aground spilling 37,000 tonnes of crude oil into Prince William sound and devastating local wildlife. However, on the 20th April 2010, an accident on the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig in the Gulf of Mexico led to one of the biggest modern day spillages of oil.

In this essay, I will investigate the causes and effects of the oil spill on the local ecosystems as well as the knock on effect on livelihoods reliant on fish and seafood industries.

**Paragraph 1** – Whilst overall demand for oil continues to increase globally, in the USA, there has been a recent slow down in consumption due to the global recession. Prices in early 2015 are the lowest for nearly eight years and as demand drops, so does the price. Oil companies will continue to cut production to attempt to stabilise the price per barrel but a serious lack of mass scale alternative energy provision still means that the USA is almost wholly reliant on oil and associated products. For this reason and because their own supplies are approximately 10 million barrels per day below their consumption, the discovery and securing of new oil fields is imperative to the future success of the country in face of stiff competition from China and India. Drilling projects in environmentally sensitive areas as well as the large scale transport of crude oil occasionally lead to problems such as the 2010 leak in the Gulf of Mexico, one of the closer oil fields supplying the domestic American market.

**Paragraph 2** – Effects of the oil spill on the natural environment

**Paragraph 3** – Effects of the oil spill on those who rely on the fishing industry for their livelihoods.

**Concluding Statement**

Don’t forget to forecast what future oil explorations may mean for environmental sustainability. The vast oil sands under pristine natural environments in Canada or in the northern polar regions, Antarctica etc.