Thermal Plume Encyclopedia Article

Thermal Plume

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Thermal Plume

Water used for cooling by **power plants** and factories is commonly returned to its original source at a temperature greater than its original temperature. This heated warm water leaves an outlet pipe in a stream-like flow known as a thermal **plume**. The water within the plume is significantly warmer than the water immediately adjacent to it. Thermal plumes are environmentally important because the introduction of heated water into lakes or slow-moving rivers can have adverse effects on aquatic life. Warmer temperatures decrease the solubility of oxygen in water, thus lowering the amount of **dissolved oxygen** available to aquatic organisms. Warmer water also causes an increase in the **respiration** rates of these organisms, and they deplete the alreadyreduced supply of oxygen more quickly. Warmer water also makes aquatic organisms more susceptible to diseases, **parasites**, and toxic substances.

See Also

Thermal Pollution