

## 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.