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BOOK REVIEWS

WASTE DISPOSAL IN THE OCEANS: MINIMIZING IMPACT, MAXIMIZING BENEFITS

DOROTHY F. SOULE and DON WALSH, Eds.
Boulder: Westview Press. 1983. Pp. 296. \$25.00.

This useful book is composed of sixteen papers which were presented at a symposium, "Ocean Disposal in the '80's," held in 1982 at the Institute for Marine and Coastal Studies of the University of Southern California. The symposium was under the sponsorship of the Southern California Academy of Sciences, with the support of the NOAA Office of Marine Pollution and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

In the book's introduction it is pointed out that in the early 1970s there were massive efforts to control pollution in the land, water, and air media "by sweeping environmental legislation, regulation efforts, and the concomitant expenditure of billions of dollars." Such efforts, however, did not always produce the desired results, and by 1977 it was belatedly recognized that a more flexible approach was needed. One cornerstone of this new approach is a reevaluation of ocean disposal "on a case-by-case, or on a local or regional basis rather than a national one." The papers presented in this volume attest to the validity of this more adaptive approach, where emphasis is placed on specific research, rather than on legal generalizations.

The text begins with a discussion of the 1981 findings of the National Advisory Committee on Oceans and Atmosphere (NACOA) which are contained in a report, "The Role of the Oceans in Waste Management Strategy." The report included a statement that wastes in the nation, requiring disposal in the ocean, on land, or in the atmosphere, were expected to increase in the next twenty years from 1.5 million to nearly 2.5 million tons per year. The NACOA report recommended that Congress and the Executive Branch adopt an integrated approach to waste management, whereby wastes would be disposed of in a manner and medium that minimizes the risk to human health and the environment, and at a price that the U.S. is prepared to pay. Disposal of dredged materials, sewage sludge, and industrial wastes should continue in the oceans, under appropriate management conditions, and at sites where evidence indicates no unreasonable environmental degradation.

The second paper, entitled "Ocean Disposal and Monitoring," adopts the thesis that ocean disposal monitoring programs "should be coordinated and designed so that they satisfy the management needs of a large number

of organizations, such as industries, municipal dischargers, certain local, state, and federal agencies, public and environmental organizations, and the U.S. Congress." The article reviews the findings of several regional workshops which were held under the auspices of EPA and NOAA to assess the adequacy of marine pollution monitoring programs in the United States. Not surprisingly, the findings were that these programs are "fragmented, uncoordinated, often duplicative, and without national or regional focus." Fortunately, some positive movement was reported in the development of a regional monitoring plan for municipal discharges in Southern California.

The chapters which follow tend to be more specific than the opening two. One covers the work of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in managing and regulating dredged material disposal in the oceans, another deals with the discharge of wastes from exploratory drilling for oil and gas on the outer continental shelf, while still another is concerned with the ocean disposal of fish processing wastes. Some of the chapters are highly technical, written by experts for experts. Yet in all cases they indicate the need for greater flexibility and adaptability in the nation's waste disposal program.

The symposium's theme of the need for regional management efforts is well-illustrated in the concluding chapter which discusses the Publicly Owned Treatment Works (POTWs); taken together, they discharge over a billion gallons of treated wastewater each day into the coastal waters of the Southern California Bight. Stringent state and federal pollution control legislation in the 1970s led the POTWs to join together to fund an independent study of the effects of waste discharge on California's coastal waters, as well as to increase their own individual capabilities for monitoring and research. One result of their combined efforts has been a decision by EPA that waivers from secondary treatment may be granted to specific POTWs for limited lengths of time, when it can be demonstrated that there would be no significant adverse marine environmental effects from such action.

The book does not purport to be a comprehensive study of ocean waste disposal, but it succeeds in presenting a number of worthwhile case studies covering various parameters of the topic. There are many graphs and tables, and each chapter has a useful bibliography. The Institute for Marine and Coastal Studies is to be congratulated for supporting the publication of the volume, and it is to be hoped that regional studies of this type for other parts of the nation may in time be forthcoming.

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