WaterTalk

Alaska Idaho Oregon Washington

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 10 Bulletin - EPA 910/9-92-043 November 1997

EPA NEWS

Clean Water In the Making

Celebrating 25 Years of Progress Under the Clean Water Act

A quarter century ago, in 1972, Congress enacted the first comprehensive national clean water legislation in response to growing public concern for serious and widespread water pollution. The **Clean Water Act** is the primary federal law that protects our nation's waters, including lakes, rivers, aquifers, and coastal areas.

Back in '72, only a third of the nation's waters were safe for fishing and swimming. Fish kills were a common site. Wetlands losses were estimated at about 460,000 acres annually. Agricultural runoff resulted in the erosion of 2.25 billion tons of soil and the deposit of large amounts of phosphorus and nitrogen into many waters. Sewage treatment plants served only 85 million people.

Today, though challenges still lie ahead, the quality of our waters has improved dramatically as a result of a cooperative effort by federal, state, tribal, and local governments to implement the pollution control programs established by the Clean Water Act. Two-thirds of the nation's waters are safe for fishing and swimming. The rate of annual wetlands losses has dropped to an estimated 80,000 acres. The amount of soil lost due to agricultural runoff has been cut by one billion tons annually, and phosphorus and nitrogen levels in water sources are down. Modern wastewater treatment facilities now serve 173 million people.

The Clean Water Act provides a comprehensive framework of standards, technical tools, and financial assistance to address the many causes of pollution and poor water quality, including municipal and industrial wastewater

The Clean Water Act's primary objective is to restore and maintain the integrity of the nation's waters. This objective translates into two fundamental goals:

- eliminate the discharge of pollutants into the nation's waters, and

- achieve water quality levels that are fishable and swimmable.

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discharges, polluted runoff from urban and rural areas, and habitat destruction. For example the Act:

- requires major industries to meet performance standards to ensure pollution control;

- charges states and tribes with setting specific water quality criteria appropriate for their waters and developing pollution control programs to meet them;

- provides funding to states and communities to help them meet their clean water infrastructure needs;

- protects valuable wetlands and other aquatic habitats through a permitting process that ensures development and other activities are conducted in an environmentally sound manner.

After 25 years, the Act continues to provide a clear path for clean water and a solid foundation for an effective national water program. For more information about the Clean Water Act and the 25th Anniversary, visit EPA's web site at www.epa.gov/owow/cwa.

Get A Clean Water Act Pack

In honor of the Clean Water Act's twenty-fifth birthday, EPA Region 10 is offering a free packet of resource materials. The packet contains a poster, information about the Clean Water Act, a bookmark, and a children's learning booklet called "A Splash In Class." For a packet, call 1-800-424-4EPA or 206/553-1200.

Adopt Your Watershed

Watersheds are nature's way of dividing up the landscape. Rivers, lakes, estuaries, wetlands, streams, even the oceans can serve as catch basins for the land adjacent to them. Ground water aquifers serve the same purpose for the land above them. The actions of people who live within a watershed affect the health of the waters that drain into it.

To encourage stewardship of the nation's water resources and to celebrate 25 years of progress under the Clean Water Act, EPA challenges citizens and organizations to **Adopt Your Watershed**. *Adoption* means any citizen-based effort to restore or protect a water body. These efforts might include stream cleanups, water quality monitoring, stream-side planting, educating school children, and so on. You can join an organized effort in your area or start your own.

EPA is building a voluntary, national catalog of organizations involved in protecting local waters, including formal watershed alliances, local groups, and schools. You can access this catalog on the internet at www.epa.gov/surf/adopt to find information specific to your state or watershed to learn about existing opportunities and local environmental conditions. You are also invited to have your organization listed in this catalog.

If you don't have internet access, call 1-888-478-2051 for information. For a free brochure detailing the Adopt Your Watershed opportunity, call 1-800-424-4EPA or 206/553-1200.

Gardening *Don'ts* Protect Environment

Believe it or not, there are gardening activities you can *quit* doing this fall that will benefit water and air quality and bring more wildlife to your yard, while allowing you more time for quiet enjoyment of the natural world. Elaine Somers, EPA's Regional Landscaping Coordinator, suggests following Flora Skelly's "Don't Do" list for gardens (Fall 1997 Northwest Garden News):

Don't use pesticides. Allow the natural balance of beneficial insects and birds to reestablish itself.

Don't rake leaves. Birds feed on the insects that live under leaves, and the leaf compost nourishes the soil for next year's growth.

Don't chop down dead or dying trees, unless they pose a hazard. These "snags" provide insect food and nesting sites for birds.

Don't mow all your lawn. If allowed to grow tall and interspersed with weeds, your lawn can be a haven for butterfly caterpillars, small mammals, and birds.

Don't remove old flower heads. The seeds provide food for overwintering birds.

Don't seek a perfect and utterly tidy garden. A half-wild place is preferred by wildlife because it offers more food and shelter.

More information? Call Elaine Somers at 206/553-2966 or 1-800-424-4EPA x2966.

WATERWORDS

Water Success In Our Backyard

In recognition of the 25th Anniversary of the Clean Water Act, we share with you two notable clean water successes, from a cast of perhaps hundreds, from right here in Region 10.

Healthy Alaska Harbor

Alaska is renowned for the richness of its fisheries. The resources found in south central Alaska are particularly abundant, with all five varieties of Pacific salmon present in addition to halibut, cod, pollock, shrimp, crab, and scallops. It's no wonder that over the years national and now international demand have caused seafood processors to increase in numbers and size. One location that has continued to grow in every way is the seafood processing center found on Kodiak Island. There are now over 10 major processors preparing millions of pounds of Alaskan seafood each year. Most of these processors are located on St. Paul Harbor.

It's not widely known, but some species of fish result in up to 75% waste. Imagine, if you can, hundreds of thousand of pounds of waste being discharged to a small bay over many years. Locals describe the smell with vivid memories, and the decaying fish literally caused sulfur-laden bubbles to rise to the surface. Of course, the smothering effect on the harbor floor and the loss of available oxygen to marine creatures were natural consequences, creating a virtual aquatic desert.

The Clean Water Act provided EPA with the regulatory tools to address this underwater nightmare. Our first approach was to require the processors to grind their waste so that it would decompose sooner. With no improvement noted, we then required that the pipes carrying the waste be pushed farther into the harbor. The problem simply moved. Finally, as technology improved, the processors installed a fish meal plant which turns much of the waste into beneficial by-products. This began the healing process for the harbor. However, the meal plant could not cope with the amount of waste being generated and processors were left with vast amounts of fish waste. EPA required deep-sea disposal of the waste using barges, in order to spare St. Paul Harbor from further insult. Finally, through Clean Water Act litigation, a larger, $15 million meal plant has been built to cope with the volumes of waste.

The Harbor is now healthy and is the playground for humpback and gray whales in addition to countless seabirds. The processors are enjoying the extra profits associated with near full use of the fish through meal production. The only voices of discontent come from the resident sea lions who once enjoyed the free meal found at the end of the processors' discharge pipes.

Reclaiming the Willamette

The Willamette River in northwestern Oregon flows through some of the most productive agricultural and forest lands in the state, as well as the most heavily populated urban areas, including the cities of Portland, Eugene, and Salem. This vital, multi-purpose river basin supports the lives of millions of people and is a source of pride for many Oregonians.

However, this has not always been the case. In the early 1960's, the Willamette was called the Northwest's most polluted waterway. Water levels were so low and the river so burdened with pollutants that migrating salmon perished, and the threat of disease and illness put a stop to safe human contact with the river.

Thanks in part to the Clean Water Act and lots of effort on the part of agencies and citizens, the river began a remarkable recovery in the 1970's that continues today. Industrial releases to the river have been brought under control, and municipal sewage no longer is dumped untreated into the river. Efforts to protect green spaces beside the river abound, and parklands and public access along the Willamette are increasing. Pleasure boating, skiing, swimming, and fishing are once again a part of life in and along the waterways. Many citizens take active roles as environmental stewards. The public is reclaiming its river.

Of course, challenges remain. Now that specific industrial and municipal sources are no longer the primary threat to the river's health, attention is shifting to more diffuse pollution

sources and to watershed restoration. "Nonpoint sources" of pollution such as urban or agricultural runoff are harder to identify and control, and human changes to the watershed have increased flooding and added stresses which are complex and difficult to address, as well. Education and pollution prevention are more than just buzz-words on the Willamette; they are real strategies designed to build on the successes already achieved. As the issues have changed, so too has EPA's involvement. While keeping a steady eye on the major pollution sources of the past, agency staff are working ever more directly with local communities to protect the sustainability of the river's resources for the future.

Enviro-Ed Grants Due Now

EPA's annual **Environmental Education Grant** cycle is underway now. Organizations such as school districts, colleges or universities, state education or environmental agencies, local or tribal educational agencies, not-for-profit organizations, or non-commercial educational broadcasters are eligible to apply for grants under this program. Individuals are not eligible for grants. *Applications are due November 15.* Although grants can range as high as $250,000, EPA encourages requests for $5000 or less. Awards will likely be made next spring. For a copy of the solicitation, call EPA at 1-800-424-4EPA or 206/553-1200. Or, visit the world wide web address: http://eelink.umich.edu.

Last year, EPA Region 10 awarded twenty-six grants to organizations located in Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. Projects receiving awards included development of a tribal environmental training program, interactive outdoor workshops, an agricultural stewards program, a high school environmental film project, an outdoor living lab, an environmental career awareness program, a wildlife corridor study, and an agricultural composting demonstration effort. For information about the projects, call Sally Hanft, EPA, at 206/553-1207.

WA Volunteer Network On Line

Watch Over Washington is now up and running. This website represents a new statewide network of about 12,000 volunteer environmental monitors who measure the conditions of theirlocal natural resources. The internet site is home to lots of information about volunteer monitoring activities throughout Washington State, including a roster of volunteer activities, event and opportunity announcements, funding and training opportunities, monitoring tips and methods, and much more. Watch Over Washington has two goals: to help citizens work together within their watersheds to provide a local source of information on environmental conditions; and to support volunteer monitors in learning how to collect reliable, consistent environmental information.

Launched by the Washington Department of Ecology, this effort is supported by the Governor's Council on Environmental Education and its member agencies, with funding from the Puget Sound Water Quality Action Team and EPA. Contributions of announcements, success stories, and frequently asked questions and answers about monitoring are welcome. Visit the site at http://www.wa.gov/ecology/wq/wow, or call Annie Phillips, Ecology, at 360/407-6408.

Wetland Grants for Governments

EPA's annual Wetland Protection Grant cycle has begun once again. Tribes, states and local governments are invited to submit Wetland Protection Grant proposals for Fiscal Year 1998. EPA will award these Clean Water Act grants to assist states, tribes, and local governments in their wetland protection efforts. Grant funds can be used to develop new wetland protection programs or refine existing programs. The intent of the grant program is to promote meaningful aquatic resources protection. Types of activities that may be considered for funding include development of wetland conservation plans, wetland restoration projects, wetland monitoring and assessment, training to build government capacity, and so on. Proposals are due December 19, 1997. Please contact your state coordinator for more information prior to preparing a proposal:

Alaska
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Washington
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Grants Available In Washington

King County Offers Stewardship Grants: Educational, governmental, and non-profit organizations in King County, Washington, can apply now for grants to fund community projects that protect or improve watersheds, streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands, or tidewaters. There are no deadlines for applications for grants under $5000, as this is an on-going, noncompetitive process. Pre-applications for grants of $5000 and above are due November 14. For details, or to apply, call Ken Pritchard, King County, at 206/296-8265.

Get A Piece of the PIE: Puget Sound Water Quality Action Team is requesting proposals for Public Involvement and Education (PIE) Projects. Any Washington resident, business or community organization, tribal or local government, or school may apply for up to $40,000 for projects directly related to the cleanup and protection of Puget Sound. Workshops to help applicants prepare proposals will be held in early December. Proposal are due January 15, 1998. For more information call 1-800-54-SOUND or 360/407-7300.

Watershed Grants Available Soon: Washington Department of Ecology will soon offer a new grant program to assist local groups involved in water supply planning. The aim of the grant program is to help local groups get a head start on watershed planning. For information call Peggy Clifford, Ecology, at 360/407-7262.

Environmental Documents:

Each of the following documents is available free through the EPA Region 10 Public Environmental Resource Center. Just call 1-800-424-4EPA or 206/553-1200.

People, Places, and Partnerships: A Progress Report on Community Based Environmental Protection. This 50-page document produced by EPA gives a status report on efforts to promote progress toward sustainability at the community level by helping communities solve environmental problems in integrated, holistic ways.

Toward a Watershed Approach: A Framework for Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration, Protection, and Management. Published by Coastal America Partnership Project, in which EPA is a participating partner, this colorful, 24-page document focuses on aquatic ecosystem protection and restoration through watershed-based resource management approaches.

Household Hazardous Waste Management: A Manual for One-Day Community Collection Programs. This 74-page EPA handbook, intended for community leaders and program organizers, is designed to help communities plan and operate a successful household hazardous waste collection program.

IPM for Schools: A How-To Manual. This 213-page manual published by EPA focuses on pest prevention in schools using effective, least-toxic methods. It includes a discussion of integrated pest management concepts pertaining to schools, a step-by-step guide for developing a pest management program, and specific strategies for dealing with 14 of the most common pests.

EPA Internet Resources:

Safe Drinking Water Act One Year Report: This EPA report marks one year of implementation of the 1996 amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act. It highlights the year's achievements and discusses future activities in public health protection. "www.epa.gov/OGWDW/year1/sdwa1y.html"

Wetlands on the Web: This recently updated web site gives access to over 180 documents and links to other sites related to wetlands protection. "www.epa.gov/OWOW/wetlands"

EPA Strategic Plan: The EPA Strategic Plan is a blueprint for taking the agency into the 21st Century and achieving critical human health and environmental protection over the next five years. It states EPA's mission and identifies ten broad goals that will serve as the long-term framework for planning and resource allocation decisions. It also lays out shorter-term objectives, as well as a set of "guiding principles" for the agency. "www.epa.gov/ocfo"

SPOTLIGHT

Micron Earns "P2" Award

Publicly recognizing ten years of pollution control efforts, EPA Region 10 awarded its latest ***Evergreen Award for Pollution Prevention*** to Micron Technology, a Boise-based semiconductor manufacturer. Micron has invested millions of dollars in pollution prevention (P2) improvements, and still accomplished an 80% annual increase in production of computer memory chips over the last decade.

Lynn McKee, Director of EPA's Boise Office, presented the ***Evergreen Award*** at a ceremony in mid-September. The pollution reductions, McKee said, show that Micron takes its role as a corporate citizen seriously, and demonstrates that companies can reduce pollution and still be economically viable.

Micron's investments to reduce pollution have resulted in: completely eliminating the use of ozone-depleting chlorofluorocarbons; replacing its chemical-based process for cleaning silicon wafers with a more effective water-based process; a revamped water reclamation and water treatment process, enabling the company to recycle more than one third of the water used in its manufacturing process; installation of best available control technology to reduce air emissions, and expanding the company-wide recycling program for scrap metal, plastics, paper, and other materials.

In addition, the company has shown a corporate commitment to environmental quality by instituting a rigorous environmental management system, and shows its leadership by sharing its pollution prevention experience with other Idaho companies.

EPA's ***Evergreen Award for Pollution Prevention*** recognizes the outstanding efforts to prevent pollution within all sectors of the greater Pacific Northwest business community. For more information about nominating a business for the ***Evergreen Award***, contact Carolyn Gangmark at 206/553-4072 or 1-800-424-4EPA x4072.

Bugs, Volunteers and Streams

The animals that live in a stream provide good indicators of that stream's health and ecological condition. Human activities that alter a watershed and interfere with its natural processes have immediate as well as long-lasting effects on the animals living in a stream. The rocks, cobble, and mud along the bottom of a stream provide shelter for a wide variety of insects including mayflies, stoneflies, true flies, and beetles. These animals, in turn, provide food for trout, salmon, herons, and kingfishers. Most freshwater invertebrates, like salmon, require clear, cool water, adequate oxygen, stable flows, and a steady source of food in order to complete their life cycles.

A model program now underway in King County, Washington, has volunteers getting quite intimate with bugs in streams. In the field, citizen volunteers are sampling and preserving freshwater insects at eight stream sites. In the lab, volunteers are learning which bugs indicate a healthy stream that could support salmon, and which animals indicate a site degraded by habitat loss, sedimentation, or toxics.

This project teaches volunteers to use simple but scientific methods so that they can directly assess the health of a stream and then communicate their assessment to biologists, planners, or policymakers. The project also presents an opportunity for a comparison of data collected by volunteers and data collected by professional biologists. Ultimately, program coordinators would like resource managers to have confidence in volunteer monitoring data so that they can supplement their own watershed analyses with volunteer assessments.

Project partners include City of Bellevue Stream Team, King County, Redmond Stream Team, Pacific Crest School, Overlake Fly Fishing Club, EPA, and other agency and citizen groups. This project is funded by the Regional Water Quality Block Grant Fund. For details contact Kit Paulsen, Bellevue Stream Team Coordinator, at 425/452-5200, Kpaulsen@bellevue.wa.us.

ECOSYSTEM

Look for Energy Star Labels

Efficient energy use and a healthy environment go hand in hand. Most of the energy consumed in homes and offices is produced by burning fossil fuels like coal, oil, and natural gas. Inefficient products result in wasted energy and that, in turn, runs up energy bills and adds to air pollution. Air pollution from burning fossil

fuels can cause respiratory disease, smog, acid rain, and global climate change. That's why EPA and the Department of Energy are working together to help businesses and consumers make energy-efficient purchasing decisions. The **Energy Star** label, the symbol for energy efficiency, can help purchasers identify products that save energy, save money, and help the environment. The performance of these products is as good or better than that of standard new equipment.

Manufacturers and retailers voluntarily join this effort by agreeing to label products that meet efficiency criteria set by EPA and Department of Energy. New computers, office equipment, appliances, heating and cooling equipment, residential lighting fixtures, and even new homes can bear the *Energy Star* label. For more information on Energy Star products and programs, call 1-888-STAR-YES, or check out the web site: www.epa.gov/energystar.html. Or, call John E. Grobler, EPA Region 10, at 206/553-1196 or 1-800-424-4EPA x1196.

CALENDAR

November

8: Northwest Environmental Justice Conference, Portland, OR. Angela Wilson, 503/823-3603.

8: Protecting Children from Toxic Exposures, Seattle, WA. Washington Toxics Coalition, 206/632-1545.

12: Marine Species Decline in Puget Sound, Public Forum, Seattle, WA. Holly Schneider Ross, 360/407-6453.

19-20: Partnerships in Preventing Polluted Runoff, Nonpoint Source Workshop, Wenatchee, WA. Bill Green, Washington Department of Ecology, 360/407-6795.

18-21: Annual Conference of the Association of Oregon Counties, Ashland, OR, 503/585-8351.

28: The Incredible Undersea Trial of Joseph P. Lawnboy, An Environmental Play by Seattle Public Theater, Seattle, WA. 206/328-4848.

December

3: The Incredible Undersea Trial of Joseph P. Lawnboy, An Environmental Play by Seattle Public Theater, Seattle, WA. 206/328-4848.

January

15: Deadline for submitting articles for February issue of WaterTalk. Andrea Lindsay, EPA, lindsay.andrea@epamail.epa.gov, 1-800-424-4EPA x1896, or 206/553-1896.

31: Sound Waters Public Workshop, Coupeville, WA. Island County/WSU Beach-watchers, Susan Berta, 360/679-7391.

February

4-6: NW Transportation Conference, Incorporating Northwest Roads & Streets, Oregon Department of Transportation, Corvallis, Oregon.

March

12-13: Puget Sound Research '98, Seattle, WA. Puget Sound Water Quality Action Team, 360/407-7321.

April

American Wetlands Month

3-May 29: (Fridays) King County Land/Water Stewardship Volunteer Training, Seattle, WA. Marilyn Freeman, 206/296-3986.

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Comments and Suggestions:

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