

**Eldridge, Edward F. *Proceedings of the 11th Pacific Northwest Symposium on Water Pollution Research: "The Social and Economic Aspects of Water-Resource Quality Control."* Portland, OR: U.S. Department of Health, Education & Welfare, Public Health Service Region IX, 8 and 9 November 1962.** (Reviewed by Alletta Brenner)

This work contains the agenda, proceedings, and conclusions of one of symposiums on water pollution that were held beginning in May 1957 up to November 1962. These meetings included 137 persons from educational institutions, regulatory agencies, state and federal departments, and industry, covering the following areas:

- Research on problems relating to water pollution in the Northwest
- Financing these research projects
- The *Sphaerotilus* (slime) problem
- Short term Bioassy
- Siltation—Its sources and effects on the aquatic environment
- Oceanographic and related estuarial pollution problems of the Northwest
- Water problems in the Watersheds on the NW
- Radioactive waste problems of the NW
- Research in water pollution and other environmental health fields
- Toxicity in the aquatic environment
- The social and economic aspects of water-resource quality control

The eleventh of the series, this report contains elements of all of these, under general area of practical, political, and economic concerns. These are addressed in both papers and reports presented at the symposium, and in recorded discussions. While the report provides some background information on the physical environmental issues faced at the time, its main emphasis is on the human socio-political aspect of the problem, ranging from inter-agency cooperation to public policy planning and development, public opinion, and economic impact.

## **Critique**

I found this report to be very helpful in terms of understanding the full range of problems faced by the Willamette basin during the post-war period of the 1950s and early 1960s before the enactment of more comprehensive pollution legislation in the 1970s. One major point worthy of note is that in most cases, even in the late fifties, scientists and policymakers understood fairly well how the majority of pollution was created and what needed to be done to avoid it. Further, they understood quite well the critical impact of pollution on the environment and with it human quality of life.

As this report so clearly illustrates, the problem was not necessarily lack of knowledge, but rather the difficulty of overcoming the socio-political hurdles that resist changes in human behavior. In this case, there were major economic and political blocks to the enactment of policies that would better protect the Willamette. Interestingly, one paper notes unequivocally that the piece of the puzzle lacking was a swell of public support, exactly the kind that would occur a decade later, with significant results.

Another major strength of this work is that it is extremely comprehensive in its evaluations. In all cases, the participants attempt to cover every pertinent area and raise numerous questions. Because they come from a wide berth of perspectives, and explicitly address the existence of institutional frameworks, this report provides a very clear picture of the social, political and structures that encompassed pollution causes and mitigations.

One shortcoming is that it does not address all forms of pollution in high detail. Further, when specific instances are noted, it is done generally and without specific scientific data. This can be accounted for by the fact this report is only one in a whole series of works. In this sense, it provides a doorway to the additional resources of the other ten symposiums, which may be located and examined. Another problem is while the importance of water to human activities is well-noted, only marginal references are made to the human health effects of pollution. Thus while public health concerns are acknowledged, little information is given on the real costs in human health and wellbeing resulting from pollution in the Willamette basin. This is characteristic of other works from this period, when the long-term concerns of cancer and other illnesses resulting from toxics was apparently less evident.

[return to info sources page](#)

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