

Information Report # 26

Newport City Sewer Outfall Observations

In the past several months Newport residents have complained about odors on Nye Beach, adjacent to the Newport sewer and Georgia Pacific outfalls. Several groups contend that the odor results from sewage, others maintain that it is Georgia Pacific's waste materials. The Newport city engineer has been instructed to investigate the problem. I feel that it is our duty at this time to report on observations that we have made in connection with this problem.

While making ecological studies at several stations in the vicinity of the sewer outfall we had occasion to make the following observations. During the summer of 1957, 9 observations of the area were made and 11 observations in 1958. On 3 occasions in 1957 and twice in 1958 it was found that the mid-beach and lower tide levels were littered with human sewage. On occasions this was so bad that it served as a deterrent to our work. However, this problem is only intermittent, apparently related to wind and tidal currents. Although, on occasions our stomachs were somewhat queasy, odor was a minor problem. On the very upper beach limits a strong odor resembling hydrogen sulfide was noted on occasions. It was believed that this was caused by sewage overflowing from septic tanks of motels and homes located directly above the beach.

Of greater importance than odor is the problem of health and esthetic values. In the area of the outfall we have in fair abundance, four shellfish species that can be used for food if they are not exposed to sewage. They are: (1) rock-boring clams (Pholadidea penita) also known as piddecks or rock oysters; (2) sea-mussel, (Mytilus californianus); (3) littleneck clams (Protothaca staminea) also called butter clams; and, (4) Dungeness crabs (Cancer magister). The effect of sewage upon crabs is unknown, however, the other animals are filter feeders and it is possible that these animals could accumulate pathogenic organisms from human sewage. It is well established that these animals can accumulate E. coli. Whenever asked about utilization of these animals for food, I find it necessary to recommend that they be avoided in the Nye Beach area.

Many people like to wander through the reef areas, gathering starfish and observing the myriad forms of marine life. Certainly, the occurrence of raw sewage does not enhance this form of beach utilization.

It would seem to this investigation that some other method of sewage disposal would be most desirable from a health, shellfish, utilization, and esthetic point of view.

C. Dale Snow  
Oregon Fish Commission  
Shellfish Investigations  
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