

The Clean Water Act



Water pollution became a big issue in the late 1960's when thousands of dead fish were being found washed up on shores and some lakes even caught on fire. Pollution was readily observable by the public and many lakes were closed to swimming. An effective means was needed to protect and clean the nation's waters, so Congress passed the Clean Water Act in 1972.

The Clean Water Act set the goal of "restoring and maintaining the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation's waters." Much has been accomplished in over 30 years since its enactment, particularly in the area of creating bodies of water that will support aquatic populations. **Point sources** of pollution from municipal and industrial sources are now monitored and controlled.

However, there is still much that needs to be done. **Nonpoint sources** of pollution from urban and rural areas are much more difficult to monitor and control, posing increasingly significant threats to our nation's water resources. Sediment, fertilizer, pesticides, manure, pet waste, oil, and other contaminants make their way to our lakes and rivers through runoff and storm sewers. As stewards of the environment, we need to continue our vigilance in preventing pollution of our nation's waterways.

Point source pollution is pollution discharged into water bodies from specific, identifiable pipes or points, such as industrial facilities.

Nonpoint source pollution is pollution that cannot be traced to a specific origin but flows from many different sources.