

Historical Threads

Everything has a history. I'm a historian. This blog is about the threads of history that I perceive in the world around me. I welcome any comments that bring light to the subject at hand. *Tempus omnia revelat.*

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2010

Some thoughts on the recent EPA critique of contaminant report from the Lower Willamette Group

The information cited below is somewhat reminiscent of the conflict between the City of Portland (CoP) and the Oregon State Sanitary Authority (OSSA) in the late 1950s regarding the city's inadequate treatment of its sewage. The OSSA (and other abatement advocates such as the local chapters of the Izaak Walton League and the City Club of Portland) were pushing the CoP to implement secondary sewage treatment, because the city's then-current primary treatment regime was insufficient to ensure adequate dissolved oxygen in and north of city limits. However, CoP leaders (Mayor Schrunk, et al.), balked at making these costly upgrades. So, the OSSA took the city to court and by 1961 forced the city to propose a tax levy and expand their sewage treatment infrastructure.

At least one place where this general pattern breaks down, however, is that pollution related to sewage is significantly less complex to deal with than the current issues with persistent, toxic, and bio-accumulative chemicals.

Ah, makes me wistful for the good ol' days of floating feces and toilet paper . . .

Scott Learn, "[Milestone report on Portland Harbor pollution lowballs risk, EPA says](#)," *Oregonian* Jan. 22, 2010, p. B8.

Key excerpts:

"EPA officials say the October report from the Lower Willamette Group prematurely rules out some harbor contaminants as threats to wildlife and overstates uncertainties about the pollution's risk to human health."

"The dispute is important: The lower the risks of harbor pollution in Willamette River sediment, the less cleanup work the group's members and other harbor landowners will have to do."

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