

Hooks and Bullets



Some Straight Talk On Pollution Debate

by Ray Trullinger

For quite some while New York's salt water anglers have been concerned about the possible effects of a recently inaugurated acid-disposal project in the Mudhole area, about 12 miles off this harbor. This concern was heightened by a number of statements which have appeared from time to time in the press.

It was repeatedly asserted, for example, that this chemical pollution would drive fish from local waters. It also was stated that one of the chemicals, an iron sulphate, as we recall, had been found responsible for the destruction of pound nets.

Wishing to ascertain known facts relative to this controversial subject, this reporter recently interviewed Dr. Bostwick H. Ketchum, of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, at Woods Hole, Mass. Dr. Ketchum is in charge of the investigation now being made into the whole matter of acid-disposal off New York Harbor and its effect, if any, on fish life. He is a distinguished member of the institution's scientific staff. It might be pointed out that the institution is a private, nonprofit organization which would not benefit in any way from distortion of facts, and that the investigation was undertaken only with the express agreement that the results would be published, regardless of how they affected the various interested parties.

Pollution Reaches Sea, No Matter Where Dumped.

"One of the facts which the critics of sea disposal constantly overlook," Dr. Ketchum first stated, "is that all pollution which is dumped into a river or harbor ultimately reaches the open sea. Carrying the wastes in a barge directly to the ocean, therefore, instead of dumping it in a river,

adds nothing to the pollution of the sea, but removes that amount of pollution from the rivers and harbors.

"Everyone will agree that all pollution is bad in one way or another. Unfortunately, in our highly industrialized civilization, with great centers of population, accumulation of waste products is unavoidable. The problem becomes, therefore, one of disposing of these materials in a way which will do the least harm, or, if possible, in a way which will do no harm at all.

"Since in this instance (acid-disposal in the Mudhole area) the waste consists of a diluted solution of sulphuric acid and iron sulphate, the distribution of both acidity and iron behind the dumping barge can be measured.

"Our investigations," Dr. Ketchum continued, "disclosed that the sea water directly behind the barge was made acid by the waste—the acidity only lasting three minutes in any volume of water. Further calculation indicated that only about 1 per cent of the water in the two-mile-square dumping area is made acid, but only for the previously mentioned three minutes. Thus, at the worst, any adverse result expected from the acid would affect only about 1 per cent of the organisms in the dumping area. When the total area of the fishing grounds is considered the possible maximum effect becomes almost infinitesimally small."

Dr. Ketchum's conclusions have enthusiastic on-the-scene support from many anglers who have been enjoying some of the finest blue-fishing in a decade along Jersey's northern coast, along with other unusually good angling.

Additional facts in connection with this investigation will be printed shortly.

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