

Ocean Dumping Ban Act Encyclopedia Article

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Ocean Dumping Ban Act

The Ocean Dumping Ban Act, enacted in 1988, significantly amended portions of the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act of 1972 and banned ocean dumping of municipal sewage sludge and industrial waste (with limited exceptions) by phased target dates. The disposal of sewage sludge in waters off New York City was a major motivation for its enactment. Eligible municipalities previously had been allowed to dispose of sewage sludge beyond the so-called 106-mile ocean waste dumpsite, but are now precluded from doing so. Ocean disposal of sewage sludge and industrial waste was totally banned after 1991. Narrow exceptions were created for certain Army Corps of Engineers dredge materials that are occasionally deposited offshore.

During the interim period from 1989, after the amendments were enacted, to 1991, when the total ban took effect, limited sewage and industrial waste dumping was allowed for businesses dumping under already existing permits. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was directed to report to Congress on an annual basis regarding the effectiveness of compliance agreements, and the progress made by permitted parties toward developing alternative systems for managing sewage sludge and industrial waste. EPA also had to report on its own efforts in identifying and implementing alternative disposal systems and general progress toward the congressional goal of terminating the ocean dumping of sewage sludge and industrial waste. EPA has interpreted these 1988 amendments to include the ocean incineration of wastes so that they must be regulated in the same manner as ocean disposal.

Internet Resource

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. "Ocean Dumping Ban Act of 1988." Available from <http://www.epa.gov/history>.