Director's Perspective

The past year was an eventful one for SCCWRP. It marked the beginning of our efforts to facilitate and coordinate regional monitoring in Southern California. Marine monitoring is currently organized around individual discharge permits in the Southern California Bight, a fragmented approach for assessing environmental quality. Present monitoring programs do not address nonpoint source discharges and there is no formal mechanism for integrating the wide array of monitoring activities and their findings. As a result, the National Research Council[a] concluded that it is difficult to assess the state of the bight as a whole.

In the past year, SCCWRP and 11 other local, state, and federal agencies[b] designed and planned a cooperative 264-site survey to assess the "health" of the benthic environment on the mainland shelf between Point Conception and the US-Mexico border. The Southern California Bight Pilot Project (SCBPP), as it is called, is a demonstration of integrated, regional, marine monitoring — participating agencies pooled their existing resources in a program that is responsive to the information needs of environmental managers and decision-makers, and the public.

The SCBPP went to sea in early FY 94/95 and you will see reports on the results in our next annual report. The early results of the SCBPP are promising; the regulatory and discharge agencies are solidly behind the concept of regional monitoring. The regulatory agencies are exploring how to build the flexibility for regional monitoring into new National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits, and the dischargers are willing to collect and analyze samples beyond the boundaries of their existing programs.

The past year also was our first full year in our new facility in Westminster. The return on the effort that we put into selecting the building, designing the laboratories, and moving staff and equipment is being realized by increased staff productivity and an expanded array of ongoing projects. As our staff grows, the facility will be more than capable of handling the diversity of activities that will follow.

We are also making progress in another area. SCCWRP has long had an intern program for undergraduate students from local colleges and universities, and we have offered training opportunities for students from abroad. We have increased our efforts to attract graduate students from local colleges and universities to work on projects germane to our mission. We now have several students working on advanced degrees while they pursue their research at SCCWRP.

This annual report contains results of work completed in FY 93/94. In this volume you will find the following: reports of our continued efforts to synthesize data on anthropogenic inputs to the coastal ocean off Southern California; reports on new techniques that we have developed or implemented at SCCWRP; reports comparing the results of existing techniques; reports on the fates of contaminants in the marine environment, including the potential fate in the seafood-consuming public; reports on the effects of contaminated sediments on benthic organisms; and reports on the life histories of benthic organisms.

As we look ahead, our efforts to identify the sources of contaminants to the coastal ocean, to learn their fates, and to measure their effects become increasingly important as the population of Southern California grows and the pressure on coastal resources increases.

Jeffrey N. Cross, Executive Director
May 1995

[a]National Research Council. 1990. *Monitoring Southern California's Coastal Waters*. National Academy Press, Washington, DC.

[b]Environmental Monitoring Division of the City of Los Angeles; County Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County; County Sanitation Districts of Orange County; the Metropolitan Wastewater Department of the City of San Diego; US EPA Region IX; the Los Angeles, Santa Ana, and San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Boards; the California State Water Resources Control Board; US EPA, EMAP; and the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Project of the US EPA, National Estuary Program.