

Director's Perspective

For over 25 years, SCCWRP has provided important scientific information about the sources, fates, and effects of wastewater and other discharges to the coastal ocean off Southern California. This annual report continues that tradition and contains the results of work largely completed in FY 1994-95.

In this volume you will find articles about our continuing efforts to synthesize data on anthropogenic inputs to the coastal ocean. These data provide an important historical perspective dating back to 1970 and convincingly demonstrate the effectiveness of regulations on point source discharges at reducing contaminant inputs to the coastal marine environment. This report contains articles on the use of chemical markers for determining the source and fate of contaminants and particles in the coastal ocean. These techniques were implemented in our analytical facility over the past several years and are now being used in the field to distinguish the inputs of materials generated by various human activities from the input of natural products. There are several articles that either describe new methods developed in our laboratory, or describe problems with existing methods and our recommendations for improvements. There are articles about the biology of benthic organisms that are used as indicator species in certain monitoring programs. Knowledge of their life histories will help us determine why they respond in particular ways to anthropogenic impacts.

Finally, there are several articles that describe the Southern California Bight Pilot Project (SCBPP), a demonstration regional monitoring program. The genesis of the SCBPP was our desire to answer questions about the “health” of the coastal ocean that were posed by environmental managers, scientists, and the public. For several decades, we have measured physical, chemical, and biological variables in reference areas on the mainland shelf off Southern California. We have provided these data to environmental managers who have used it to assess conditions in impacted areas and to address the status of the Southern California Bight as a whole. It is a cooperative effort among SCCWRP and 11 local, state, and federal agencies to coordinate and integrate a number of existing marine monitoring activities and their findings into a regional monitoring program. The participating agencies planned the project in 1993 and pooled their existing resources to go to sea in 1994. We report the first results of that effort in this volume.

The past year was significant for SCCWRP and it was significant for me. After 15 years at SCCWRP — nearly 60% of its existence — I have resigned and will practice my skills in another sector of government science. During my tenure, which I often likened to a roller coaster ride, I learned much about science and science management. But I learned more about how the commitment and dedication of scientists, technicians, and administrators can determine the success of an organization. Now it is time for change (which can benefit individuals as well as organizations). I wish the new director and the staff continued success.

Jeffrey N. Cross, Executive Director

(December 1991 - December 1995)