

## **A program for standardizing the identification of marine invertebrates**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Around wastewater discharge sites the types of organisms, their population sizes and their distributional patterns are being used to determine the extent of change in the environment (Smith and Green, 1976). In 1973, the Coastal Water Project examined the ecology of the southern California Bight, particularly emphasizing alterations in the kinds of animals living around these discharge sites. It was thought that comparative analysis of these data would provide valuable information. It was later determined, however, data would provide valuable information. It was later determined, however, that not all of the changes observed in species composition were actually due to environmental changes; instead, some reflected inconsistent or inaccurate identifications of some of the over 4,000 species of invertebrates in southern California. (Word and Charwat, 1974; Word, 1975; Word, et al., 1976).

In order to correct this problem and increase the value of these data, we started the Taxonomic Standardization Program to facilitate the exchange of taxonomic information and promote uniform identification among 150 practicing southern California taxonomists.

This program standardizes the level of identification and the names used for each particular species through a series of publications and workshops with various taxonomic experts. Workshops are typically scheduled every 2 months at which presentations are made and keys are distributed among 30 -40 participants. After the formal presentations the group of organisms under discussion are looked at in at the laboratory and the keys critically examined. Information presented during the workshops, including the keys, any modifications to them, and new taxonomic information are then published in the bi-monthly Proceedings of the Taxonomic Standardization Program which is mailed to over 2000 participants in the program. The proceedings are meant to be stimulants for interest in a particular group of animals and hopefully the interest created will result in comments about particularly difficult couplets in the keys or specimens which do not fit the keys. They are additionally intended to provide up-to-date, accurate taxonomic information.

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