



# **ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS SUMMARY**

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Office of Public Affairs

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Washington, D.C. 20460

## EPA STILL "VITAL"

David Freeman (headed White House energy policy staff from '68 to '71) says in Wash. Post (2/10/74) that while Simon, Federal Energy Office "focal point of public attention," EPA "just as vital as ever. The medical evidence on air pollution has not changed--it is still a health hazard. The damage from strip mining, oil spills and the rest is still a clear and present danger." Says "crucial test" to come in '75, when agency implements primary air standards: "The ability of EPA to stick by its guns and withstand the pressures from inside and outside will depend on how much the public cares."

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## ENERGY SHORTAGES SHAPE EPA BUDGET

Environment taking back seat to energy at EPA, opines Wall St. Journal (2/6/74). Of \$215 million increase from '74 in '75 fiscal year operating budget (\$731 million, this and following figures exclude sewage grants), \$169 million to go for energy research. Sizable chunk of funds, however, will be transferred to other fed agencies.... Train hoped for \$40 million more, says Wash. Post (2/5/74). Quotes him: "We will have a strong, adequately funded program in 1975." Earlier, Nixon directed EPA to allocate only \$4 billion of Congressionally authorized \$7 billion for sewage plant construction in '75 (see 1/17/74 News Summary).

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## RESERVE MUST STOP DUMPING

In "classic" environmental case, U.S. vs. Reserve Mining Co., Federal District Court judge Miles Lord warns Reserve to stop dumping 67,000 tons of taconite waste (containing large amounts of asbestos fibers) daily into Lake Superior, or face possibility of plant closedown at conclusion of trial in three months. Unless "dramatic new testimony [enters] case," vows Lord, Reserve will be required to switch to land disposal. U.S. also contends airborne asbestos from Reserve plant endangers surrounding town of Silver Bay, Minnesota. (N.Y. Times, 2/10/74)

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## MASS TRANSIT RAILROADS GET \$18 BILLION BOOST

Doubling present Fed commitment to mass transit, Nixon proposes \$16 billion to improve railroads, subways, bus lines, report N.Y. Times (2/10/74), Wash. Star (2/10/74). Two-thirds would be allocated to state, local governments, with local officials deciding whether funds spent for capital investment or operating expenses. Companion

legislation asks \$2 billion Fed loan guarantees to railroads for capital investment in facilities, equipment. Nixon says, "Today our railroads are more necessary than ever. They make extremely efficient use of fuel with little negative effect on the environment."

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#### WILL SIMON HAVE FINAL SAY ON U.S. ENERGY SITES?

Administration abandons draft bill, opposed by Train, CEQ's Peterson, empowering Interior Secretary to designate energy facility sites, notes Wash. Post (2/10/74), but Federal Energy Office, utilizing provisions of '73 Coastal Zone Management and Land Use Policy Acts, plans to encourage power-plant siting by permitting Simon to reverse decisions of fed line agencies refusing approval of state-planned projects.

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#### OCEAN POLLUTION BILL SIGNED

Implementing international oil damage agreement, Nixon signs bill permitting Coast Guard to prevent, clean up oil pollution threatening shoreline areas Wash. Star, (2/7/74).

IN RELATED DEVELOPMENTS. Famed oceanographer Jacques Cousteau says ocean crisis more serious than energy crisis, public must realize that sea "a delicate and fragile thing...The chemical elements that are poured into our rivers and oceans by the various industries and the untreated waste products of our cities...will one day return to you, it never disappears. For instance, many of the penguins [in Antarctica] have traces of DDT in them. The deep currents of the sea carry pollutants all around the world. After World War I, the Allies dumped mustard gas into the ocean in huge quantities and 30 years later children on French beaches were being severely burned by it (Cleveland Plain Dealer, 1/21/74).

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#### PRIVATE CONCERN WILL MONITOR ALASKA PIPELINE

Interior's Morton signs "unprecedented" contract for Mechanics Research, Inc., Calif. engineering company, to devote a million man-hours over next four years to reviewing design, monitoring construction of Alaska Pipeline (permit signed 1/23/74), minimizing disruption of terrain, wildlife. Morton emphasizes that fed government not shifting responsibility--contractor employees will be under tight rein of Interior at all times (N.Y. Times, 2/8/74).

IN OTHER OIL DEVELOPMENTS. In wake of energy shortages, unemployment, bill introduced in Delaware legislature to lift that state's '71 seacoast ban against oil refineries, superports, other heavy industry, relates Wash. Post (2/5/74). Dupont (state's largest employer), Building and Construction Trades Council (AFL-CIO), support repeal; Gov. Tribitt, rest of state politicians, "reappraising" their support of Coastal Zone Act. Building Council tells members that Act keeping industry out of Delaware, but state legislator Andrew Knox says Act encourages many to locate there --partly because of desirable environment state has committed itself to preserve.

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#### NIXON CAN'T HALT CROSS-FLORIDA CANAL

U.S. Circuit Judge Harvey Johnsen rules Nixon had no authority to halt construc-

tion of cross-Florida barge canal in '71, since decision rests with Congress. Orders OMB immediately to release impounded \$150,000 for environmental study of canal project (Wash. Post, 2/5/74).

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### SUPREME COURT DECISION MAY SPELL DOOM FOR CLASS-ACTION SUITS

If Supreme Court upholds lower court ruling in case of Eisen v. Carlisle & Jacquelin, "class-action suits...could be wiped out...say many consumer groups and legal experts." Two crucial issues in case outlined by Christian Science Monitor (2/6/74): (1) Do those bringing class-action suits have to notify class members individually? Class-action advocates says enormous notification costs would scuttle suits before they begin, opponents say notification failure is unconstitutional; (2) Should losers be required to lower their prices for specified time in lieu of paying damages to customers unable to be identified or located? Class-action proponents say it's only way to punish wrongdoers, opponents say benefiting those not hurt by past actions of defendants is not supported by law. American Civil Liberties Union spokesman says, "What's at stake here is whether or not the 'class action' is going to be a device by which heretofore powerless segments of society--consumers--are going to be able to get together and stand up to large corporations."

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### ENVIRONMENTALISM COSTS LITTLE IN ENERGY, MONEY

Six-month study by four Univ. of Mich. scientists shows pollution control projects increase energy use by only 3 percent--less than typical increase in yearly U.S. energy consumption. Study team also asserts, "We have found the shortage of energy is not grounds for reducing the effort to clean up the environment." (Detroit News, 2/3/74).....Study by NERC, Cincinnati, says environmental control cost "isn't nearly what critics claim": (1) Little of 50% per capita total energy consumption increase since '50 is due to environmental control systems; (2) Temporary 10% fuel economy loss from auto pollution control devices will be gained back when catalytic converters used; (3) Energy required to operate SO<sub>2</sub> control devices, tertiary municipal wastewater treatment plants, solid waste collection and disposal operations, will range from 0.45 to 1.04% of today's total energy demand; (4) Electrical energy recovery from 11% of nations solid waste would restore 0.45% energy loss for these environmental controls--recovery from 26% would supply the 1.04% energy demand (Cincinnati Enquirer, 2/3/74).

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### AEC SPECIALISTS URGE BETTER REACTOR INSPECTION

AEC task force recommends agency improve inspection procedures, reports Wash. Post (2/5/74). Says current regulatory practices adequate for 40 reactors now in operation, but considering hundreds of reactors expected by 2000, and equipment failures now occurring, "further continuing actions need to be taken to provide additional assurance" that chance of bad accident will be one in a million a year per reactor.

IN RELATED DEVELOPMENTS. AEC discloses plans to create centralized, computer-equipped facility linked with reactors throughout nation, that would serve as special warning system to minimize casualties in case of nuclear accident, relates N.Y. Times (2/1/74). Within minutes after accident, would offer accurate forecasts of radioactive "travel and diffusion."..... In line with Nixon plan to shorten 10 year time-span to review, build nuclear plants, AEC proposes speed-up of environmental-impact review

from 12 to six months, plus separate submittals of environmental reports, safety analyses before construction permit issuance (currently simultaneous), says Wall St. Journal (1/27/74). Also, under proposed changes AEC could routinely authorize certain plant site work after favorable environmental ruling, but before final safety findings. Agency officials claim no easing of environmental, safety standards, say various requirements "merely being shuffled around."..... Syndicated columnist Jack Anderson in Wash. Post (1/22/74) cites seven-month study by Michigan Public Interest Research Group that finds dangerous laxity in atomic waste hauling by trucks and trains. Drivers have no real training for hauling nuclear cargo, carry no radioactive leak detectors. Police ignorant of routes, casks inadequately marked. "The Atomic Energy Commission virtually does no testing of the casks either in its laboratories or under road conditions. Instead, it leaves this grave responsibility to the manufacturers and users, who can save money by winking at safety."....Ralph Nader tells Congressional Joint Committee on Atomic Energy that nuclear power a "form of technological suicide," and committee should "quickly pursue the process of its own dissolution." Wash. Post, 1/29/74)

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#### "ALL ROADS LEAD TO ROME" DEPT.

A Sacramento, Calif. restaurateur, reports Not Man Apart (2/74), was recently escorted from a busy freeway for obstructing traffic. Wearing a Roman helmet and flowing cape, he was driving a chariot drawn by two horses. Undeterred, and determined to "burn hay instead of gas," he plans to double his horse power.

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