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for Scientific Information  
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Solid Waste Disposal in Monroe County, New York*

*By: Herman S. Forest  
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THE ROCHESTER COMMITTEE FOR SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION  
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Solid Waste Disposal in Monroe County, New York

Statement for Public Information Meeting on February 4, 1971

Conducted by City of Rochester on behalf of County of Monroe and State of New York  
(with minor revisions for publication)

by  
Herman S. Forest\*

Information Needed for Intelligent Decision Making

The Rochester Committee for Scientific Information joined with the community in the notable educational achievement which preceded the community decisions to lead the nation in abatement of water pollution. The problem of solid waste which now faces us is much more complex, much more difficult technically, and much more provocative of community dissent and special interest pressures.

R.C.S.I. has begun to gather and transmit information on the solid waste problem. On December 10, 1970, it conducted a joint meeting with industry groups concerned with packaging and with the recycling of glass. The establishment of a Recycling Task Force with volunteers from the Rochester Chapter of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers, was announced at that time. Frederick E. Ford and his group are already learning the outline of their task and will begin to publish results in the near future. The Committee has recently published two Bulletins reporting environmental analyses of proposed sites for metropolitan land fill disposal in the Monroe County towns of Mendon and Parma (1, 2). The Parma study was undertaken at the request of the Town Supervisor and its engineer. We regret that other governmental units have not sought the help of skilled local community resources in a similar manner.

Ecological Assessment

There is apparently a lack of appreciation of broad environmental considerations in the plans for Irondequoit Bay area and the Town of Riga. Certainly, the reclamation of the Bay area is of the highest priority, and the State cannot afford to lose any more prime farm land, except in the direst necessity.

Regional Planning

Solid waste disposal, or any enterprise of such magnitude should be undertaken only within the context of regional planning. Information available to the public and to R.C.S.I. indicates only vaguely that the Genesee-Finger Lakes Regional Planning

\*This bulletin is substantially based on a report prepared for R.C.S.I. by Fred Goldstein, Chairman of the Metropolitan Ecology Committee, Richard Reeves, and Fred Ford.

Board "participated" in the preparation of the Greeley-Hansen Report (3). We have seen no evidence that the Board in fact approved of any portion of the report. A formal approval by the regional planning agency would help provide the control mechanism required for broad environmental management.

### Landfills

It was the opinion of the R.C.S.I. study committee that it will be difficult to find a site which is ecologically justifiable, not to say politically acceptable. If the decision is made to establish any landfill, independent ecological assessments and monitoring of the operation by competent professional engineers, geologists, and biologists are necessary to protect the public interest.

It is critical that the public understand that a properly sited and operated landfill is not a dump. Even if landfill is a primitive method, it is nevertheless a workable method in the immediate future. The American Chemical Society, in a study published in 1969, approved of landfills as one alternate means of disposal. R.C.S.I. will cooperate with all people of good will to provide rational information on land-filling.

### Incineration

Insufficient evidence has been received to indicate that high temperature incineration is the immediate solution to the major portion of the solid waste problem in the Rochester Metropolitan Area.

### Composting

Although the high hopes for composting have not materialized, there is substantial evidence that composting can be a part of an integrated disposal program. Here, particularly, some imagination and enterprise may prove most rewarding.

### Recycling

The utmost willingness and enterprise by both officials and citizens in this community will not be able to activate a significant recycling program immediately. An optimistic guess for operation is 2-5 years.

### Computer Analysis of Cost and Benefits

System analysis of alternatives in solid waste disposal are in progress at the University of Rochester with the aid of computer operations. There is no assurance that the information will be decisive, but it must certainly be worth considering. This is the kind of information, along with engineering and ecology, which needs to be considered.

### Waste Input Reduction

It is incredible that the community is accepting the inevitability of a rapidly growing mountain of solid waste. The best solution to the problem is not to create it. Waste input can be reduced if we seriously make an attempt and discard current notions of what we must do for convenience. Neither wringing our hands nor conducting well-meaning anti-litter campaigns will solve the input problem. A mechanism must be established to work on the problem with a measure of the support given to studying disposal.

No Single Solution

At this time there is insufficient information for a rational decision. The community should not commit itself quickly to a single solution. Rather, we need a balanced mixture of further education, multiple techniques, and some experimentation. In any course of action, ecological judgment of the highest independence and skill should precede a community decision.

REFERENCES

- (1) R. L. Reeves, The Suitability of the Pittsford Gravel Corporation Gravel Pit as a Metropolitan Landfill Site, Town of Mendon, Monroe County, R.C.S.I. Bulletin # 109 (M). January 1971.
- (2) J.E. Hubbard, R. W. Adams, R. L. Merle and R. L. Reeves, Suitability of the Menmax Corporation's Proposed Site for a Metropolitan Landfill Disposal Area in the Town of Parma, Monroe County, R.C.S.I. Bulletin #110 (M). January 1971.
- (3) Greeley and Hanson, Consulting Engineers, Comprehensive Solid Waste Study, Volumes I and II, Project No. CSWP-4, Monroe County. Chicago, Illinois, May, 1970.