Environment & Society Portal

Multimedia Library Collection: Environment and History (journal)

"Sludge on Tap: Queensland's First Water Pollution Legislation, 1944–1985"

Wegner, Jan

Wegner, Jan. “Sludge on Tap: Queensland’s First Water Pollution Legislation, 1944–1985.” *Environment and History* 15, no. 2 (May, 2009): 199–216. doi:10.3197/096734009X437981 . Before the environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s, controls on water pollution in Australia were piecemeal, scattered through a number of Acts. These often regulated pollution by compromises with the polluters, rather than preventing it outright, unless a threat to public health could be proved. This situation characterised the first Act written specifically to control water pollution in the Australian state of Queensland, sparked by the pollution of the Herbert River with tin dredge effluent after 1944. Conditions imposed on the dredge operations were compromises, chosen for their utility for dredging rather than their effectiveness, and further legislation maintained the situation so that pollution of the river and water supplies drawn from it continued for 40 years. The Act, and the pollution episode which sparked it, are an example of a theme noticeable in some pre-1970s pollution cases: controls were imposed that were cheap to implement or useful to the polluting agency, but which were ineffective in stopping pollution outright. Unfortunately, in Queensland, that attitude persisted after other jurisdictions had moved to more environmentally sensitive styles of pollution management. All rights reserved. © 2009 The White Horse Press

Download:
PDF: https://www.environmentandsociety.org/sites/default/files/key_docs/wegner-15-2.pdf

Related links:

- *Environment and History* at The White Horse Press
  http://www.erica.demon.co.uk/EH.html

Websites linked in this text:

- http://dx.doi.org/10.3197/096734009X437981

Environment and History (journal) Collection, Multimedia Library, Environment & Society Portal
"Sludge on Tap: Queensland's First Water Pollution Legislation, 1944–1985"
Source URL: http://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/3375
Print date: 14 November 2026 06:11:06