



OCEAN SLUDGE DUMPING

A.3320 (Colton, et al.)

S.5583 (Lanza)

Summary

This bill would amend the state's Environmental Conservation Law to prohibit the disposal of dredged spoils that contain toxic pollutants into the waters of the New York State marine district.

Explanation

Considerable progress has been made with regard to ending the practice of dumping toxic-contaminated sludge and soils into New York's ocean waters in recent years. However, much of that progress will be undone if the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is allowed to execute its plan to dump highly contaminated dredge spoils in the borrow pits off the coast of Staten Island. These pits were dug decades ago to, among other purposes, provide sand for New York City beaches. Filling these pits with contaminated sludge and covering them with an underwater cap, as proposed by the Corps might be cost-effective in the short run, but this practice will simply move underwater poisons from one part of the ocean floor to another.

The material to be dumped contains elevated levels of highly toxic and carcinogenic chemicals and heavy metals, including dioxin, PCBs, petroleum hydrocarbons, and heavy metals such as mercury and arsenic. The Corps has estimated that 150 million cubic yards of contaminated dredge spoils will be dumped in the borrow pits over a 10-year period. From three to five percent of that amount will be dispersed into New York's waters by the process of dumping alone. Wave action, storms and tides will, over time, disperse more of these pollutants. This source of ongoing pollution will compromise and discourage efforts to clean the state's waters, such as the cleanup of toxic PCBs from the Hudson River, that are underway to reestablish the region's populations of striped bass and other fish.

Environmental Advocates of New York supports this bill.

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