8. GROUND WATER PROTECTION

Ground water is one of our most vital resources, and its pollution is a cause of national concern. The increased emphasis on oil and gas exploration in the past decade, combined with a growth in population and an ever-expanding industrial complex has created an increased potential for ground water contamination from a variety of sources.

Major aspects of ground water protection technology are not well understood or defined, including percolation rates of a variety of chemical and biological agents in various soil types, degradation or attenuation of these agents during the percolation process, and the actual observed impact on a receiving ground water formation which might effect its beneficial uses.

The draft ground water protection strategy proposed by EPA failed to adequately address the key issue of common protection terminology, was contradictory in its federal/state jurisdictional position and proposed "supporting" only the development of a ground water strategy by draining funds from other federal grants to support this effort. This would have the effect of dissipating ongoing environmental protection efforts and, in that the FY 1985 funding levels for these existing grants has been proposed by the Administration to be held constant at the FY 1984 funding level, the end result would be counter-productive in all areas of environmental management.

The EPA proposal would further penalize those states which have already developed a ground water protection strategy and would, if the allocation of unobligated funds to "co-operating states" be enacted, cause greater disparity due to the large differences in unobligated funds in the various regions. There is an apparent intent to place the fiscal burden of ground water protection on the states which are already fiscally overburdened with EPA mandating, by utilizing drawdowns from in-place grants and the authority vested therein, a national ground water protection strategy which would be developed and operated by the states.

Recommendations

The Southern Legislative Conference supports a comprehensive ground water strategy that recognizes the scope of ground water contamination, seeks to develop and implement common terminology for the control of pollution of ground water from all sources, and does not utilize federal grant monies allocated for other environmental protection efforts to develop and implement this strategy.