

John Bartley

I have seen many environmental threats during my time. Back in the '60s, living in the Great Lakes region, we noticed a ten-foot ring of oily sludge extending from the shore all around Lake Erie. It was then that news stories emerged about industrial fires burning on the lake in Chicago or Cleveland. These dramatic developments and other disturbing events led to the creation of the EPA during the Nixon Administration.

As a Tacoman, I am sensitive to issues of pollution and resource waste. Sometimes I have been personally affected, as when I lived downstream of the Westrock Plant and smelled an unnatural, sickly sweet "aroma" wafting into our apartment on certain days. Or when I bought a house, and found myself remediating soil contamination that resulted from the famous copper operations on Ruston Way.

I don't have a technical background, but I still feel a need to voice my reservations concerning the Westrock project now under consideration.

Questions and comments:

1. Why is an increase in efficiency cited as a reason for increased pollution? That sounds absurd.
2. Would the number of employees increase as a result of the change?
3. Have the health effects of the proposed pollution increase been properly studied? This should be paramount. We breath the air and we cannot buy bottled air.
4. What is the increase of water usage associated with this project? Westrock currently is the biggest fresh water consumer, using as much water as all the residents combined.
5. How accurate are the estimates of increased pollution?
6. Have representatives of indigenous people weighed in on this proposal? Have vulnerable local populations been considered?
7. Finally: Is everyone at Ecology of one mind about approving this project, or are there dissenters?