

**Procedures for**  
**INVESTIGATION OF FISH-KILLS**

*A Guide for Field Reconnaissance and Data Collection*

Prepared by the  
**AQUATIC-LIFE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
of the  
**OHIO RIVER VALLEY**  
**WATER SANITATION COMMISSION**

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# Procedures for INVESTIGATION OF FISH-KILLS

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Prepared by the  
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**OHIO RIVER VALLEY  
WATER SANITATION COMMISSION**

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## FOREWORD

A special responsibility rests upon water-pollution control agencies to deal promptly and effectively with the investigation of a fish-kill. Quite often—but not always—a fish-kill is the unfortunate result of a rapid change in water-quality. This is a prime reason for commanding immediate attention by regulatory authorities. But there is a public relations aspect that is equally compelling. Many people have been sensitized to the evils of pollution; and fish-kills are a visible manifestation that something is wrong. It is important, therefore, for the administrative agency to quickly ascertain the facts, announce its findings and, where corrective measures are indicated, give assurance that these have been instituted.

This handbook had its origin in the desire of the eight states signatory to the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Compact—Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, Virginia, New York, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Kentucky—to perfect their practice in the investigation of fish-kills. A fish-kill investigation is a specialized form of endeavor. The conditions resulting in a fish-kill often are dynamic, and field investigations not only must be launched with dispatch but should be organized to secure all the data necessary for a proper appraisal of cause.

This desire for a practical outline of what to do and how to do it was transmitted to the Aquatic-Life Advisory Committee of the Commission. This committee, whose membership comprises a group of national authorities in fisheries science and management, was organized by invitation of the Commission in 1952. Among its contributions to advancing the work of the Commission, all of which are being rendered as a public service, was the compilation of this handbook.

EDWARD J. CLEARY  
*Executive Director  
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Collection of essential information is facilitated by the use of a field kit equipped for determination of dissolved oxygen, pH, carbon dioxide, alkalinity and acidity.

