Beneficial Use Encyclopedia Article

Beneficial Use

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Contents

Beneficial Use Encyclopedia Article.....1

Contents.....2

Beneficial Use.....3

Beneficial Use

Beneficial use is the productive use of water or solid material that is normally discarded or disposed of in a landfill or burned.

Throughout the years, more materials that have been disposed of in the past are finding new demands and uses. Economics have shifted to make these products more valuable for beneficial use. The U.S. environmental laws and regulations in the 1970s established national policies to search for ways to recycle society's discarded products. The National Resource Recovery Act of 1975 and the Clean Water Act of 1972 set goals for the beneficial use of solid waste, wastewater, and **biosolids**, and the National Environment Policy Act of 1969 required public agencies to include beneficial use in decision making.

Wastewater from treatment plants is becoming more valuable in water-short areas of the country such as California. It is used for the irrigation of agricultural crops or residential landscaping as an alternative to the use of water that is normally reserved for drinking. Biosolids are being recycled as an alternative to commercial fertilizers. Used soda bottles are turned into fence posts and clothing. Dredge spoils are no longer disposed of in deep-water areas, but instead are used as a resource for a variety of beneficial purposes, including beach nourishment, construction fill, landscaping, and landfill cover.

Internet Resource

Northeast Waste Management Officials' Association. "Beneficial Use of Waste Materials." Available from http://www.newmoa.org/Newmoa.