

Control of Land-Based Pollution in Singapore and Singapore's Experience in Cleaning Up the Singapore River

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Control of Land-Based Pollution in Singapore

In Singapore, major marine sources of pollution include ship-borne pollution and land-based pollution. Land-based pollutants originate from municipal, agricultural and industrial activities. Many studies have indicated that land-based sources are the major contributors of the marine pollution.

Being a city-state, the main sources of land-based pollution in Singapore are domestic wastewater, both sewage and sullage, and industrial effluent. There are also some commercial farms in the suburban areas, which generate pollutive wastes. These wastes, if not properly managed and disposed of, will also pollute our inland and coastal waters.

With proper planning control, provision of environmental infrastructure and pollution control facilities, stringent enforcement of pollution control legislation and an effective monitoring programme, Singapore has controlled the land-based pollution sources effectively and kept the inland and coastal waters clean and healthy.

Singapore's Experience in the Cleaning Up of Singapore River

Urbanisation, industrial growth and population growth in Singapore had resulted in the pollution of its rivers in the past when there was inadequate control measures in place to control wastewater generated from the various sources from entering and polluting the rivers.

The rivers were in a deplorable state. They were choked with refuse, sludge, filth and wastewater. They were smelly, dirty, septic and devoid of fish or any aquatic life. The government decided that the pollution could not be allowed to continue and something had to be done to clean up the rivers so that fish and other aquatic life could return to the rivers.



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In 1977, the government embarked on a ten-year comprehensive programme of cleaning up the rivers in the Singapore River and Kallang Basin catchments. The then Ministry of the Environment (ENV) was given the responsibility to co-ordinate the cleaning-up operations with the help of different government agencies.

With the successful completion of the cleaning up in September 1987, the Singapore River and Kallang Basin have been transformed from the polluted, smelly rivers devoid of aquatic life to clean rivers where fish and other aquatic life have returned, and the rivers are now used for various recreational uses by Singaporeans as well as for tourists. The cleaning up of Singapore River and Kallang Basin is a project which best illustrates Singapore's effort in combating water pollution problems caused by human activities.