
April 1984 to: August 1984

Location City/State/Province: Ocean County, New Jersey
Location Description: coastal region of New Jersey, site of Ciba-Geigy Factory

Goals:
Activists aimed to end dumping of toxic chemicals into the Atlantic Ocean by the Toms River Ciba-Geigy factory.

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions › Formation of Ocean County Citizens for Clean Water
- 004. Signed public statements

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 170. Nonviolent invasion › Green Peace activists illegally entered Ciba property to map the campus and take soil samples.

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions › Green Peace held a press conference demanding Ciba close the pipeline.
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 016. Picketing › Green Peace activists stood outside the Ciba factory with signs.
- 173. Nonviolent occupation › Green Peace activists occupied water tower for two days.

Methods in 4th segment:

Methods in 5th segment:

Methods in 6th segment:

- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions › A Greenpeace representative called Ciba-Geigy to warn them of Greenpeace’s intentions to block the pipes.
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support › 200 attended rally on boardwalk.
- 172. Nonviolent obstruction › Greenpeace activists blocked Ciba pipe vents with metal caps and waterproof cement.

Additional methods (Timing Unknown):
006. Group or mass petitions  › Green Peace activists collected petitions signatures from a boardwalk stand.

Notes on Methods:
Between August 1984 and April 1985, and from June 1985 to 1988, the Ocean County Citizens for Clean Water continued to meet and organize against the pipeline. It is unclear if any direct actions were taken in these time periods.

Classifications

Classification:
Change
Cluster:
Environment
Group characterization:

- Ocean County residents and Green Peace activists from out-of-town

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:
Ocean County Citizens for Clean Water, science teacher Stephanie Waters, Rose Denado, David Rappaport

Partners:
Green Peace

External allies:
not known

Involvement of social elites:
The town mayor allowed exceptions to restrictive ordinances to permit the Green Peace boat to dock in the Lavalette harbor.

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- Greenpeace (enter)

Groups in 2nd Segment:

Groups in 3rd Segment:

- Greenpeace (exit)

Groups in 4th Segment:

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:

- Green Peace (enter and exit)

Segment Length: 2 months
Ciba-Geigy was an international chemical corporation based in Europe, specializing in the production of dies and pharmaceuticals. During the 1930’s, Ciba-Geigy established a secluded factory in Toms River, Ocean County, New Jersey, where it synthesized vat dies and other pigments. The Tom’s River operation was a major employer in the community, while secretively disposing of toxic factory waste in unlined pits on site. The operation expanded over three decades, and, in 1966, Ciba-Geigy constructed a ten-mile long, subterranean pipeline to the Atlantic Ocean for disposing liquid waste. Area residents expressed concerns at the time of construction, yet communities eventually forgot the pipe existed. By 1984, Ciba-Geigy was discharging nearly two billion gallons of waste into the Atlantic annually.

In April 1984, a segment of the Ciba-Geigy pipeline ruptured in downtown Toms River, breaking open a roadway and causing traffic disruption. No residents were injured, but the community was shocked by the exposure of the pipeline and demanded that Ciba-Geigy explain. Ciba-Geigy executive George Winkle responded by claiming the factory effluent was “99% water and 1% salt”.

Within two weeks of the incident, local science teacher Stephanie Waters formed a group, Ocean County Citizens for Clean Water, to advocate for stricter regulation of and greater transparency by Ciba-Geigy. Waters learned in May that Ciba-Geigy’s permit for ocean waste dumping had recently expired. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection would conduct hearings later that year to determine if, and under what conditions, the pipe would remain active. Citizens for Clean Water chose to directly target the Department by publishing open letters in area newspapers. The group soon had a core of a dozen members.

Also around this time, the United States Environmental Protection Agency released the results of a Ciba-Geigy waste analysis. The report found Ciba-Geigy pipeline effluent to be highly toxic and mutagenic, even under strong dilution. The Agency concluded the factory’s Atlantic discharge should not be allowed to continue.

Local retiree Rose Denado kept a beach house in Lavallette, located near the discharge of the Ciba-Geigy pipeline. Denado followed reporting on the controversy surrounding Ciba-Geigy’s pollution, and she was concerned for her community. Denado
explained the situation in a letter to Greenpeace, which had recently interfered with similar waste dumping off the shore of Scotland. David Rappaport (age 25) was manager for Greenpeace actions on toxic waste in the North East, and he took Denado’s concerns seriously. Rappaport called Waters to discuss the issues in Toms River, and he then met in person with members of Ocean County Citizens for Clean Water; members were concerned that Greenpeace was too radical for local conservatives but chose to accept support.

Greenpeace had recently refurbished a 40 foot long boat, and Rappaport hoped to use it to attract media attention to Ocean County. Throughout May, Rappaport explored the waters of Ortlieb and Lavallette for a boat-landing site, and he familiarized himself with local boat enthusiasts. Throughout June and early July, some 25 Greenpeace members arrived to Ocean County, all staying at Denado’s beach home. When the Greenpeace boat arrived in July, activists made daily trips to the boat in preparation. Lavallette residents shared opposition to the pipe, and some community members joined the Greenpeace strategy meetings. The town mayor allowed exceptions to restrictive ordinances to permit the boat to dock. He announced Lavallette would be a safe haven for Greenpeace.

During mid-July, Rappaport led two clandestine nighttime intrusions of Ciba-Geigy factory grounds; Greenpeace members scaled the perimeter fences, mapped the campus layout, and took soil samples for toxicity testing. Meanwhile, Greenpeace scuba divers explored the ocean floor until finding the Ciba-Geigy pipe vents. Divers collected samples of the murky effluent, also for toxicity testing. During the last week of July, Greenpeace activists held a press conference in Lavallette, calling for the closure of the Ciba-Geigy pipeline. Ciba-Geigy executives agreed to meet the following day with Rappaport and others. The meeting was inconsequential, and Rappaport proceeded with scheduled actions.

Before dawn on 30 July, Greenpeace activists Beverly Baker and Sam Sprunt trespassed onto Ciba-Geigy property, dressed as construction workers. Aided by a reconnaissance map, the two made their way to Ciba-Geigy’s 160-foot-tall water tower, which was clearly visible from a nearby highway. Baker and Sprunt climbed the tower to the catwalk, where they released a large banner reading “reduce it, don’t produce it”. When the first shift arrived at 8:00, workers were surprised by the site. The cautious executives chose to offer the occupiers food and supplies instead of arrest. Additional Greenpeace members were stationed outside of factory grounds, holding signs. Ciba-Geigy workers reacted angrily, and several threatened violence against the demonstrators. One Ciba-Geigy worker broke the car window and struck a Greenpeace activist sitting inside; another worker broke a sign. Police charged the first with assault and the second with mischief. News helicopters arrived in the afternoon, and Philadelphia and New York City media outlets reported that evening on the occupation.

Baker and Strunt remained on the water tower for over two full days, and media outlets in the United States and Europe reported on their action. On 2 August, the two descended the tower on Rappaport’s orders, thereby ending the occupation. That same morning, Greenpeace announced that its divers had blocked 13 of 50 Ciba-Geigy pipe vents with foam and wood plugs. The plugs were ineffective at preventing flow; Rappaport claimed this was deliberate, so as avoid potential rupture. Ciba-Geigy quickly hired divers to clear the vents.

Both Greenpeace actions brought local support. Greenpeace members established a boardwalk stand for informing the community about the pipeline and collected petition signatures opposing waste dumping. In the middle of August, Greenpeace announced that soil samples from Ciba-Geigy property were found to contain cyanide, and effluent samples from the Atlantic included several heavy metals. Rappaport left the area by 6 August, and most Greenpeace members shortly followed.

Ocean County Citizens for Clean water made the most of Greenpeace actions, and meeting attendance reached 150 by August. Ciba-Geigy workers sometimes interrupted meetings of the Ocean County Citizens for Clean Water. On 16 October, the state Department of Environmental Protection held its first hearing in seven years on Ciba-Geigy’s liquid waste. The process resulted in stricter effluent standards, but the Department allowed Ciba-Geigy to continue operating its Atlantic pipeline. The state of New Jersey launched a 14-month investigation of Ciba-Geigy-Geigy pollution practices.

In spring of 1985, Ciba-Geigy sponsored an endangered-species coloring contest at West Dover Elementary School. The teacher Sheila McVeigh organized a boycott of the contest, insisting that Ocean County residents were the actual endangered species. Twenty other teachers joined the boycott by not involving their students in the contest. McVeigh met with Ciba-Geigy
executives after the protest.
In mid-April, Greenpeace returned in another boat, and anchored near the Ciba-Geigy pipe discharge. On 20 April, Greenpeace activist Jon Hinck called Ciba-Geigy to warn them of Greenpeace’s intentions to block the pipes. Scuba-diving Greenpeace activists plugged the pipes with metal caps and secured them with bolts and waterproof cement. On the second of progressively plugging the pipes, the State police arrived on a patrol boat and arrested twelve of the Greenpeace activists.
After their release from jail, the Greenpeace activists traveled to Trenton, the capital of New Jersey, to apply pressure to the Department of Environmental Protection commissioner Robert Hughey. They filled a wading pool with opaque water collected from the discharge, dead fish, and a beach ball, and invited Hughey to go for a swim.
In May 1985, two hundred people gathered for a rally on the Lavallette boardwalk. The rally had a patriotic theme, with participants singing “God Bless America,” and served as a celebration of the Greenpeace activists.
In October, a local judge dismissed the charges against the twelve Greenpeace activists. On 25 October 1985, state attorney general, Irwin Kimmilman, announced 35 criminal indictments against Ciba-Geigy and its leadership, alleging improper disposal of waste on company property and through ocean dumping. New Jersey had never indicted a major chemical company prior to Ciba-Geigy, and activists viewed the decision as a victory. Following six years of legal action, the state imposed fines for over $1-million, and Ciba-Geigy agreed to assist in paying for toxic waste remediation.

Ciba-Geigy began closing Toms River operations in 1988, but the factory continued to release effluent through the Atlantic pipeline. As part of a December 1991 permit, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection ordered that the pipeline be closed. Ciba-Geigy improved waste removal, diverting effluent from the pipeline to the local water utility. The factory ceased production in 1996, and a combination of federal and state authorities took charge of remediating the heavily polluted company grounds.

Research Notes

Influences:

not known

Sources:


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