

A meaningful boost

"The primary responsibility for protecting and enhancing the environment lies with state and local governments, industry and the public," the President said in his 1972 budget message, "but the Federal Government must—and will—provide vigorous leadership."

Accordingly, the Federal budget for 1972 authorizes an increase of \$1.3 billion for pollution control and abatement programs.

The focus of Federal antipollution activities is the new Environmental Protection Agency. For fiscal 1972, funds requested for the activities grouped into EPA have been increased by 91 percent to \$2.45 billion. This amount, said EPA Administrator William D. Ruckelshaus, "is as much as we can intelligently absorb" in the budget for fiscal 1972.

Budget requests for the EPA include a doubling of grants for waste treatment plant construction to a total of \$2 billion. This money, says Ruckelshaus, "will enable us to provide greatly expanded and much needed financial and technical assistance to municipalities to construct, maintain, and operate adequate waste treatment facilities." A total of \$6 billion would be allotted to construction of waste treatment plants for the period 1972 through 1974.

Other water quality programs of the EPA are increased by \$19 million to a total of \$137 million. These increases are primarily for grants to improve state and local water quality programs and for improved evaluation of alternative solutions to water pollution.

An increase of \$5.5 million for pesticides research will enable EPA to reduce the backlog of registration applications for pesticides and to prepare for the re-registration of an estimated 10,000 pesticide products in 1972.

Domestic air pollution programs in the EPA are allotted \$128.8 million. Radiation studies will receive \$8.5 million and the solid-waste program is increased to \$19 million. Total employment on EPA programs, said Ruckelshaus, will be increased some 42 percent during the next 18 months.

In a separate transmittal, the EPA will request \$85 million for implementation of the Clean Air Act of 1970, the Resources Recovery Act of 1970, over-all organization and management of the EPA programs and other new proposals.

The Interior Department's Office of Water Resources Research budget contains an increase of \$1.2 million, most of which will go to research on water problems in metropolitan areas.

Interior's Office of Coal Research is budgeted an additional \$3.8 million for accelerated pilot plant research to develop economic processes for producing a low-pollution gas fuel from coal (SN: 1/30/71, p. 84).

Increased funds are also provided to further reduce pollution at Federal facilities and for a program to dispose of Great Lakes harbor dredging wastes without adding to water pollution.

Legislation will again be proposed, the President said, to create a new Environmental Financing Authority, which would assist communities that have difficulty in borrowing at reasonable rates to meet their share of the costs of water pollution control facilities. □

Selective cuts

No further closings of particle accelerators are in prospect under the Atomic Energy Commission's budget for fiscal 1972 even though funds for research in physical sciences will take a \$12 million cut. Last year the commission decreed that the Princeton-Pennsylvania Accelerator would have to be closed and it seemed likely that one accelerator a year would go until there were only three left (SN: 3/28/70, p. 327).

If that is the long-range policy, it is in abeyance this year. All existing accelerators will be maintained, although at slightly less than their 1971 levels. The exception is the National Accelerator Laboratory at Batavia, Ill., which is scheduled for an operating budget of \$11.9 million (compared with \$9.15 million last year) as its 200-GeV accelerator nears operation.

The cuts in research money are not being absorbed across the board. Significant losers are low-energy physics, down \$2.4 million, and chemistry, down \$2.6 million. Research on controlled thermonuclear fusion is maintained at virtually the same amount of money (\$28 million) as in fiscal 1971, a testimony, AEC spokesmen say, to the high priority accorded its efforts to develop new means of generating power (SN: 1/30/71, p. 84).

The total AEC budget, \$2.25 billion, is down about \$57 million from fiscal 1971, but the figure masks significant internal changes. For example, the closing of two plutonium-producing reactors at Richland, Wash., accounts for a reduction of \$34 million. They are being closed, the commission says, because their production is no longer needed. Meanwhile, however, development of high-gain breeder reactors to produce fuel for other reactors is scheduled for an increase of nearly \$19 million.

Project Plowshare, the study of civilian application of nuclear explosives, comes down from \$7.4 million to \$5 million. The new budget carries no money for most of the excavation and natural gas experiments, which have proved less than satisfying. No new underground shots are contemplated.

Other significant increases are \$44 million for production of enriched uranium and \$41 million for nuclear weapons production and surveillance. An entirely new project is the provision of a burying place for nuclear wastes in an abandoned salt mine near Lyons, Kan. (SN: 12/19/70, p. 463). This year the AEC is asking Congress to authorize the whole \$25 million cost of this facility, but it only wants to spend \$3.5 million of the money this year. □

Air pollution standards proposed

Just over a month ago, President Nixon signed the Clean Air Act (SN: 1/9/71, p. 22). The new law provides for drastic changes in enforcement of air pollution standards and directs the Environmental Protection Agency to set the new standards. Last week, the EPA published standards for six air pollutants considered dangerous to health.

A spokesman for the EPA says the standards could require drastic curtailment of automotive traffic in some large cities, such as Chicago, Los Angeles, New York and Washington. The law also provides for an emergency alert system by which use of automobiles and other fuel burners could be cut back if pollution reaches dangerous levels. Chicago already has such an alert system. Though some cities have

local ordinances governing air pollution, the EPA regulations are the first national standards.

The standards, in concentrations per cubic meter: **Sulfur oxides:** 80 micrograms annual arithmetic mean or 365 micrograms maximum 24-hour concentration. **Particulates:** 75 micrograms annual geometric mean, 260 micrograms maximum 24-hour concentration. **Carbon monoxide:** 10 milligrams maximum 8-hour concentration, 15 milligrams maximum one-hour concentration. **Photochemical oxidants:** 125 micrograms maximum one-hour concentration. **Nitrogen oxides:** 100 micrograms annual arithmetic mean, 250 micrograms 24-hour concentration. **Hydrocarbons:** 125 micrograms maximum 3-hour concentration (during the morning rush hour). □