Federal Common Law and Water Pollution: Statutory Preemption or Preservation?

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NOTES

FEDERAL COMMON LAW AND WATER POLLUTION: STATUTORY PREEMPTION OR PRESERVATION?

INTRODUCTION

Pollution of the nation's water has become an increasing concern for government, industry, and the public. Although the primary efforts at halting water pollution have been legislative, courts also have been requested to resolve this environmental problem. In Illinois v. City of Milwaukee, the Supreme Court reaffirmed the well-established right of a state to assert a federal common law nuisance action for interstate water pollution. More importantly, the Court

1. Environmental Law Institute, Federal Environmental Law 2 (1974); A Reitze, 1 Environmental Law 4-2 (1972); Jackson, Foreword: Environmental Quality, The Courts, and The Congress, 69 Mich. L. Rev. 1073, 1073-74 (1970); Introduction to 1 Harv. Envt'l L. Rev. at xvi-xviii (1976). "Our planet is beset with a cancer which threatens our very existence and which will not respond to the kind of treatment that has been prescribed in the past. The cancer of water pollution was engendered by our abuse of our lakes, streams, rivers, and oceans; it has thrive on our half-hearted attempts to control it; and like any other disease, it can kill us." 118 Cong. Rec. 33692 (1972), reprinted in 1 Environmental Policy Division of the Cong. Research Serv., A Legislative History of the Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972, at 161 (1973) [hereinafter cited as Legislative History] (remarks of Sen. Muskie).


5. Id. at 104-08; see North Dakota v. Minnesota, 263 U.S. 365 (1923); Pennsylvania v. West Virginia, 262 U.S. 553 (1923); New York v. New Jersey, 256 U.S. 296 (1921); Georgia v. Tennessee Copper Co., 206 U.S. 230 (1907); Kansas v. Colorado, 206 U.S. 46 (1907); Missouri v. Illinois, 180 U.S. 208 (1901).
held that federal common law provides a jurisdictional basis for suing in federal district court.

Some federal courts, however, interpreted the Illinois decision as a mandate from the Court to fashion a federal nuisance action applicable to all parties and all bodies of water. These extensions of


Illinois have occurred despite the passage of comprehensive federal water pollution legislation. Resort to the vagaries of "[p]oor old nuisance" to control water pollution is especially disconcerting be-

9. Illinois v. Outboard Marine Corp., 619 F.2d 623, 630 (7th Cir.) (all waters of United States), petition for cert. filed, 49 U.S.L.W. 30,3 (U.S. July 28, 1980) (No. 80-126); Stream Pollution Control Bd. v. United States Steel Corp., 512 F.2d 1036, 1040 (7th Cir. 1975) (federal common law may extend "to all of our navigable waters"); United States ex rel. Scott v. United States Steel Corp., 356 F. Supp. 556, 558 (N.D. Ill. 1973) (denied motion to dismiss federal common law claim based on intrastate water pollution). Most courts have restricted the federal nuisance action to interstate waters. Ancarrow v. City of Richmond, 600 F.2d 443, 445 (4th Cir.), cert. denied, 444 U.S. 992 (1979); Massachusetts v. United States Veterans Adm’n, 541 F.2d 119, 123 (1st Cir. 1976); Committee for Consideration of Jones Falls Sewage Sys. v. Train, 539 F.2d 1006, 1010 (4th Cir. 1976); Reserve Mining Co. v. EPA, 514 F.2d 492, 520-21 (8th Cir. 1975), modified and remanded on other grounds, 529 F.2d 181 (8th Cir. 1976); Parsell v. Shell Oil Co., 421 F. Supp. 1275, 1281 (D. Conn. 1976), aff’d mem. sub nom. East End Yacht Club, Inc. v. Shell Oil Co., 573 F.2d 1289 (2d Cir. 1977).


cause it was in response to the inadequacies of the common law that federal regulatory schemes were enacted.\textsuperscript{12} The \textit{Illinois} litigation is again before the Supreme Court.\textsuperscript{13} The primary question on appeal is whether the Clean Water Act of 1972 (CWA) preempts the federal common law of nuisance.\textsuperscript{14} This Note contends that the CWA has, in certain situations, supplanted the federal common law in controlling pollution of our nation's water supply. The federal common law of nuisance, however, remains a vehicle for protecting our federal structure of government by providing an impartial means of adjudicating states' rights in interstate water resources.

I. Background: History of Water Pollution Control

Historically, the primary mechanism for controlling water pollution was the common law of nuisance.\textsuperscript{15} The case-by-case approach of common law, however, proved inadequate to deal with the modern pollution problems of our highly industrial society.\textsuperscript{16} In response to the ad hoc methodology of nuisance law\textsuperscript{17} and the increasing environ-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{12} F. Grad, Treatise on Environmental Law § 3.03 (1977), Wright, supra note 11, at 331; see Environmental Law Institute, supra note 1, at 3-17, Hines, supra note 11, at 201-04.
\item \textsuperscript{14} City of Milwaukee v. Illinois, 48 U.S.L.W. 3279 (U.S. Sept. 11, 1979) (No. 79-408) (news summary of questions presented), cert. granted, 445 U.S. 926 (1980). The Supreme Court has decided to hear an appeal in another case presenting a similar question. Middlesex County Sewerage Auth. v. National Sew Clammers Ass'n, 101 S. Ct. 314 (1980) (Nos. 79-1711, 79-1754, 79-1760 & 80-12). The question presented is whether a federal common law nuisance action for damages sustained from water pollution, if ever available to a private citizen, is preempted by the CWA. Id. at 314-15.
\item \textsuperscript{15} McRae, \textit{The Development of Nuisance in the Early Common Law}, 1 U. Fla. L. Rev. 27, 37 (1948). Early nuisance cases involved diversion of water. Id. The nuisance action, however, was soon extended to conduct "infecting and corrupting" air and water. William Aldred's Case, 77 Eng. Rep. 816, 821 (K.B. 1611). Since \textit{William Aldred's Case}, nuisance has been widely used in environmental litigation. Cartwright, \textit{Handling of Air and Water Pollution Cases by the Plaintiff}, 9 Forum 639, 642-43 (1974).
\item \textsuperscript{17} See note 12 supra and accompanying text.
\end{itemize}
mental concerns of the nation, Congress, in 1949, enacted the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (FWPCA). Nevertheless, the FWPCA, although repeatedly amended, remained an insufficient response to the nation's growing water pollution problem.

Relying on a decentralized approach to water pollution control, the FWPCA entrusted the primary regulatory apparatus to the states. State decision-making, however, engendered a parochial approach to controlling pollution. Strong business pressures often forced states to set low water quality standards rather than lose important industries to states with more lenient environmental regulations. Additionally,

20. See note 10 supra.
22. 33 U.S.C. § 1160 (repealed 1972). Pursuant to the FWPCA, states were responsible for developing water quality standards applicable to their waters. Id. § 1160(c)(1), (3). States were free to establish enforcement procedures regarding intrastate waters. S. Rep. No. 414, 92d Cong., 1st Sess. 2 (1971), reprinted in [1972] U.S. Code Cong. & Ad. News 3668, 3669, reprinted in 2 Legislative History, supra note 1, at 1420. A conference procedure was available among state and federal authorities if a state's standards were unacceptably low. 33 U.S.C. § 1160(c)(2) (repealed 1972). State enforcement was possible when a discharge resulted in a reduction of water quality below the established standard, id. § 1160(c)(5), but federal initiative was limited to interstate pollution endangering health or welfare, and then only after a six month wait and administrative hearings. Id. § 1160(f)(1). These procedures clearly limited the effectiveness of the Act. EPA v. State Water Resources Control Bd., 426 U.S. 200, 202-03 (1976); Amendments, supra note 21, at 674-75.
state officials, less conscious of problems beyond their own jurisdiction, were often likely to disregard spillovers of pollutants into adjoining states. Therefore, the FWPCA failed to resolve two major problems: protection of the quality of the nation's water supply, and protection of the environmental integrity of the states. Both these problems were addressed in *Illinois v. City of Milwaukee*, and ironically, it was "[p]oor old nuisance" that emerged as the only law then available to deal with the complexities presented.

**A. Illinois v. City of Milwaukee**

The *Illinois* litigation began when the State of Illinois, frustrated in its attempts to gain relief under the FWPCA, alleged that four cities and two local sewage commissions of the State of Wisconsin were polluting Lake Michigan, an interstate body of water. Pursuant to section 1251(a)(1) of the United States Code, which vests in the Supreme Court original and exclusive jurisdiction over controversies between states, Illinois sought injunctive relief in the Supreme Court.
The Court concluded, however, that the defendants were merely political subdivisions of a state. This distinction permitted the Court to explore potential alternative forums, its jurisdiction over suits involving only one state being non-exclusive. The Court reasoned that the finding of an adequate alternative forum would allow it to avoid the burden of trying this and similar original actions.

33. 406 U.S. at 93.
34. Id. at 97. It is well-settled that a political subdivision is not the equivalent of a state. E.g., Bullard v. City of Cisco, 290 U.S. 179 (1933); Cowles v. Mercer County, 74 U.S. (7 Wall.) 118 (1868). Illinois also attempted to join the State of Wisconsin as a necessary party defendant. 406 U.S. at 94. Although, under appropriate pleadings, Wisconsin could have been joined as a defendant, its joinder was not mandatory. Id. at 97. If Wisconsin had been joined, it appears the Court would have heard the case because, only six weeks after Illinois was decided, the Court accepted jurisdiction over an interstate water pollution dispute involving two states. Vermont v. New York, 406 U.S. 186 (1972).

35. 406 U.S. at 98. The Court said that it would "honor" its original jurisdiction but "only in appropriate cases." Id. at 93. What is appropriate "necessarily involves the availability of another forum." Id.

36. 28 U.S.C. § 1251(b)(3) (1976). This section provides, in part, that the Supreme Court "shall have original but not exclusive jurisdiction of . . . [a]ll actions or proceedings by a State against the citizens of another State." Id. Traditionally, the Court construed its original jurisdiction as self-executing. Florida v. Georgia, 58 U.S. (17 How.) 478, 491-92 (1854); Martin v. Hunter's Lessee, 14 U.S. (1 Wheat.) 304, 332-33 (1816); Marbury v. Madison, 5 U.S. (1 Cranch) 137, 174 (1803). Later cases upheld the power of Congress to grant concurrent jurisdiction to lower federal courts over cases arising under the Supreme Court's original jurisdiction. Ames v. Kansas, 111 U.S. 449, 469 (1884); Gittings v. Crawford, 10 F. Cas. 447, 449 (D. Md. 1838) (No. 5465). Federal courts, therefore, potentially have jurisdiction over cases involving a state, but such jurisdiction is not provided by 28 U.S.C. § 1251(b)(3) (1976). C. Wright, supra note 5, at 502. See generally Hart & Wechsler, supra note 6, at 242-87; C. Wright, A. Miller & E. Cooper, Federal Practice and Procedure §§ 3525-3528 (1975 & Supp. 1980).

37. 406 U.S. at 93-94. The burden that original jurisdiction suits imposed on the Supreme Court is readily apparent from earlier cases. In Arizona v. California, 373 U.S. 546 (1963), for example, an interstate water dispute required 22 hours of oral argument, involved two successive Special Masters, and resulted in over 25,000 pages of transcripts. Id. at 551. Another interstate water dispute required 11 years for trial and argument before a final decree was issued. Wyoming v. Colorado, 259 U.S. 419, 496 (1922). Enforcement and supervision of the final decree required another 35 years of the Court's attention. See Wyoming v. Colorado, 286 U.S. 494 (1932) (suit to enforce 1922 decree); Wyoming v. Colorado, 298 U.S. 573 (1936) (modification of 1922 decree); Wyoming v. Colorado, 309 U.S. 572 (1940) (suit for contempt of 1936 decree; decree modified); Wyoming v. Colorado, 353 U.S. 953 (1957) (new decree on the merits). In a third interstate dispute, Georgia v. Tennessee Copper Co., 206 U.S. 230 (1907), a modifiable decree issued in 1907 was finally vacated by the Court in 1938. Georgia v. Tennessee Copper Co., 304 U.S. 546 (1938). See generally Hart & Wechsler, supra note 6, at 287; Note, The Original Jurisdiction of the United States Supreme Court, 11 Stan. L. Rev. 665, 697-98 (1959) [hereinafter cited as Original Jurisdiction]. The task involved in an original suit is especially onerous in light of the rising number of cases on the Court's docket. See
while still fulfilling its obligation under article III of the United States Constitution.\(^{38}\)

Interpreting the district courts' federal question jurisdiction\(^{39}\) to include federal common law claims,\(^{40}\) the Court held that Illinois' cause of action presented a federal question and was adjudicable in federal district court.\(^{41}\) Permitting Illinois to pursue a federal common law

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*The Supreme Court, 1972 Term, 87 Harv. L. Rev. 57, 310 (1973)* (Court had 4,636 cases on its docket in 1972). The resulting time pressures have forced the Court to reconsider its role as a trial court. Griswold, *The Supreme Court's Case Load: Civil Rights and Other Problems*, 1973 U. Ill. L.F. 615, 626-27.

38. 406 U.S. at 93. Article III of the United States Constitution provides, in part, that "[i]n all Cases . . . in which a State shall be a Party, the supreme Court shall have original Jurisdiction." U.S. Const. art. III, § 2, cl. 2. "[I]t is a time-honored maxim . . . that a court possessed of jurisdiction generally must exercise it." Ohio v. Wyandotte Chems. Corp., 401 U.S. 493, 496-97 (1971) (citation omitted). The Court has "no more right to decline the exercise of jurisdiction which is given, than to usurp that which is not given." Cohens v. Virginia, 19 U.S. (6 Wheat.) 264, 403 (1821). The Court, however, also has an obligation to promote and further "the current role of the Court . . . as the final federal appellate court." Ohio v. Wyandotte Chems. Corp., 401 U.S. 493, 499 (1971). Therefore, the Court has exercised its discretion to deny its original jurisdiction. *Arizona v. New Mexico*, 425 U.S. 794, 797 (1976) (per curiam) (appropriate state forum); Ohio v. Wyandotte Chems. Corp., 401 U.S. 493, 501 (1971) (same); Massachusetts v. Missouri, 308 U.S. 1, 19 (1939) (appropriate lower federal forum). See generally *Original Jurisdiction*, supra note 37, at 694-700.


40. 406 U.S. at 100. The Court concluded that "§ 1331 jurisdiction will support claims founded upon federal common law." Id. Substantial lower court precedent existed for the Court's holding. *Texas v. Pankey*, 441 F.2d 236 (10th Cir. 1971); *Ivy Broadcasting Co. v. AT&T*, 391 F.2d 486 (2d Cir. 1968); *Murphy v. Colonial Fed. Sav. & Loan Ass'n*, 388 F.2d 609 (2d Cir. 1967); *Stokes v. Adair*, 265 F.2d 662 (4th Cir.), cert. denied, 361 U.S. 816 (1959); *Mater v. Holley*, 200 F.2d 123 (5th Cir. 1952). The *Illinois Court apparently overruled its decision in Romero v. International Terminal Operating Co.*, 358 U.S. 354 (1959), which held that the federal maritime common law did not arise under the laws of the United States. Id. at 359-80. General maritime law, however, may be distinguished from federal common law. At the time 28 U.S.C. § 1331 (1976) was enacted, admiralty courts provided an adequate federal forum for maritime rights, and the *Romero* Court found little indication that Congress intended the districts courts as alternative forums for maritime claims. 358 U.S. at 369; see 28 U.S.C. § 1333 (1976) (admiralty jurisdiction statute). Extension of the federal question jurisdiction to federal common law claims has been a subject of debate. See *Woods & Reed, The Supreme Court and Interstate Environmental Quality: Some Notes on the Wyandotte Case*, 12 Ariz. L. Rev. 691 (1970), *Interstate Pollution*, supra note 3; 50 Tex. L. Rev. 183 (1971); 1972 Wis. L. Rev. 597.

41. 406 U.S. at 99-100. Diversity jurisdiction is not available to a state because a state is not considered a citizen of itself within the meaning of 28 U.S.C. § 1332 (1976). *Postal Tel. Cable Co. v. Alabama*, 155 U.S. 482, 487 (1894). One commentator, however, has suggested that a state could commence a diversity action by utilizing its state agencies or attorney general as the lead plaintiff. *Interstate Pollution*, supra note 3, at 1459.
action in district court was deemed necessary to protect two distinct federal interests—purity of the nation's water supply and states' quasi-sovereign interests in interstate water. The Court noted that the existence of a federal common law remedy would be consistent with and, in fact, supplement the policy of the FWPCA by providing relief for violations of the Act. Nevertheless, the Court warned that "new federal laws and new federal regulations may in time pre-empt the field of federal common law of nuisance." 45

B. The CWA

Six months after the Illinois decision, Congress passed the CWA. Its passage was the culmination of more than three years of deliberations dealing with interstate waters as demonstrating a federal interest in the nation's waters. Id.

42. One commentator has dismissed as dicta the Court's choice of federal common law as the rule of decision. F. Grad, supra note 12, § 3.03. It would seem, however, that the Court's holding was premised upon finding a federal right in favor of Illinois to sustain a lower federal court's jurisdiction. See notes 39-41 supra and accompanying text. Therefore, the choice of law was crucial to the Court's decision. "A court's stated and ... necessary basis for deciding does not become dictum ...." Friendly, supra note 6, at 385.

43. 406 U.S. at 101-02. The Court cited the broad range of existing federal statutes dealing with interstate waters as demonstrating a federal interest in the nation's waters. Id.

44. Id. at 105-07. The Court noted that a public nuisance created upon an interstate body of water could 'amount to a casus belli for a State lower down, unless removed,' id. at 107 (quoting Missouri v. Illinois, 200 U.S. 496, 521 (1906)), and that resort to the peaceful means of litigation to protect its quasi-sovereign interest was a rationale for federal court jurisdiction over such disputes. Id. at 107-08 & n.9; see Stewart, supra note 24, at 1229.

45. 406 U.S. at 103-04. The Court stated that "[t]he remedy sought by Illinois is not within the precise scope of remedies prescribed by Congress. Yet the remedies which Congress provides are not necessarily the only federal remedies available." Id. at 103. The Court has implied injunctive relief for violations of a similar regulatory scheme. E.g., Wyandotte Transp. Co. v. United States, 389 U.S. 191, 202-03 (1967) (Rivers and Harbors Appropriation Act of 1899, 33 U.S.C. §§ 401-467 (1976)); United States v. Republic Steel Corp., 362 U.S. 482, 492 (1960) (same); Sanitary Dist. v. United States, 266 U.S. 405, 428 (1925) (same).


tion and compromise on how best to improve the FWPCA. The stated purpose of the CWA is "to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters." Congress declared it the "national [goal] to eliminate the discharge of pollutants into the waters of the United States by 1985." Furthermore, the CWA required, as an interim objective, the achievement of water quality sufficient for the protection and propagation of wildlife by 1981. To achieve these lofty goals, Congress created a legislative-administrative partnership, with Congress supplying the objectives and general guidelines and an expert administrative agency administering and implementing the specific regulatory programs.

The CWA directs the administrator of the EPA to set increasingly stringent effluent limitations on a uniform nationwide basis. The federal effluent limitations promulgated by the EPA would then constitute the minimum level of pollution control under the CWA. When local conditions require, the EPA may set stricter regional standards to protect public water supplies, wildlife and agricultural uses, and recreational needs, provided the needs outweigh the economic costs.

To balance the interest in pollution free water with the competing interest in economic prosperity, Congress expressly provided for a gradual compliance timetable. Additionally, the CWA directs the administrator, when setting effluent limitations, to consider the tech-
The technological feasibility of compliance. The applicable effluent limitations are then incorporated into a national permit system, imposing legal obligations on each pollution discharger. It is unlawful for any person to discharge pollutants without obtaining and complying with a permit. In accordance with the policies of the CWA, all interested persons who may be affected by a discharger are entitled to notice and an opportunity for a hearing prior to the issuance of any permit.

Congress also recognized "the primary responsibilities and rights of States to prevent . . . pollution." It enlisted the states in its battle against pollution by permitting the states to assume all regulatory duties over their intrastate waters provided the EPA has approved the program as complying with all federal standards. Additionally, states are empowered to impose unilaterally more stringent standards upon their waterways as a matter of state law.

58. Id. § 1311 (1976 & Supp. III 1979). Congress chose to link the effluent standards to the ability of polluters to obtain pollution control technology. Id. Section 1311(b) provides a two-step procedure by which the administrator sets increasingly stringent standards. The first step, to be accomplished by 1977, requires polluters to obtain "the best practicable control technology currently available." Id. § 1311(b)(1)(A). The second step, to be accomplished by 1987, requires polluters to meet standards based on the application of "the best available technology economically achievable." Id. § 1311(b)(2)(F).


63. Id. § 1342(a)-(d), construed in Crown Simpson Pulp Co. v. Costle, 445 U.S. 193, 193-94 (1980); E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Co. v. Train, 430 U.S. 112, 119-20 & n.7 (1977); EPA v. State Water Resources Control Bd., 426 U.S. 200, 206-08 (1976). To institute its own permit program, a state must follow specific EPA procedures. 40 C.F.R. §§ 123.1-62 (1979). Once the agency approves the program, the federal permit program is suspended. 33 U.S.C. § 1342(c) (1976). The agency continues to receive copies of state permit applications and retains the right to veto state permits. Id. § 1342(d). It may, however, waive this notice requirement, id. § 1342(e), and the responsibility for supervising state programs. Id. § 1342(d)(3).

64. 33 U.S.C. § 1370 (1976). State standards are subject only to initial EPA approval. Id. § 1342. Further action by a state is subject only to the discretionary approval of the EPA. District of Columbia v. Schramm, 631 F.2d 854, 859 (D.C. Cir. 1980); Mianus River Preservation Comm. v. EPA, 541 F.2d 899, 909 n.24 (2d Cir. 1976). In contrast, the federal administrator may only require more stringent
Most importantly, the CWA strengthens the enforcement provisions of the FWPCA. The CWA imposes criminal penalties on violators and authorizes the EPA to bring civil proceedings "for appropriate relief, including a permanent or temporary injunction." Congress also provided for two private rights of action applicable to an individual as well as to a "State, municipality, commission, or political subdivision." Any citizen is empowered to bring an action against a person alleged to have violated any effluent limitation or against the federal administrator for failure to perform any non-discretionary duty. Courts may order the enforcement of the effluent standard, require the administrator to perform his statutory duty, and impose civil penalties against the violator.

federal standards if necessitated and cost justified, 33 U.S.C. § 1312(b) (1976), and then only after public hearings, id. § 1312(b)(1), and judicial review. Id. § 1369(b).

McThernia, supra note 25, at 204; Amendments, supra note 21, at 698, Water Pollution Disputes, supra note 30, at 144.

33 U.S.C. § 1319(c) (1976). The criminal penalties include fines of up to $25,000 per day for violations and imprisonment of up to one year for willful or negligent violations. Id., construed in United States v. Frezzo Bros., Inc., 602 F.2d 1123, 1124 (3d Cir. 1979) (first use of CWA's criminal sanctions), cert. denied, 444 U.S. 1074 (1980). Despite the ability of the government to seek criminal sanctions under § 1319(c), the government has relied primarily upon civil restraints. Id., Glenn, The Crime of "Pollution": The Role of Federal Water Pollution Criminal Sanctions, 11 Am. Crim. L. Rev. 835, 836 (1973).

33 U.S.C. § 1319(b) (1976). The CWA also provides the administrator with emergency power to seek immediate abatement of any discharge endangering livelihood or health regardless of statutory compliance. Id. § 1364.

Id. § 1365(a).

Id. § 1362(5), construed in Massachusetts v. United States Veterans Adm'n, 541 F.2d 119 (1st Cir. 1976).

33 U.S.C. § 1365(g) (1976) defines "citizen" as "a person or persons having an interest which is or may be adversely affected." Id. The legislative history explicitly states that a person is adversely affected only if there is injury in fact. S. Rep. No. 1236, 92d Cong., 2d Sess. 145-46 (1972), reprinted in [1972] U.S. Code Cong. & Ad. News 3776, 3822-23, reprinted in 1 Legislative History, supra note 1, at 328-29. The injury could be to one's "[a]esthetic and environmental well-being," but it must be demonstrated "that the party seeking review [is] himself among the injured." Sierra Club v. Morton, 405 U.S. 727, 734-35 (1972); see Currie, Judicial Review Under Federal Pollution Laws, 62 Iowa L. Rev. 1221, 1273 (1977).

33 U.S.C. § 1365(a)(1) (1976), construed in Marathon Oil Co. v. EPA, 564 F.2d 1533 (9th Cir. 1977).


33 U.S.C. § 1365(a) (1976), construed in United States v. Cutter Laboratories Inc., 413 F. Supp. 1295, 1297-98 (E.D. Tenn. 1976); Sun Enterprises, Ltd. v. Train,
II. PROTECTION OF THE FEDERAL INTEREST IN CLEAN WATER: PREEMPTION OF FEDERAL COMMON LAW

A fundamental and important principle of the American system of government is the doctrine of separation of powers. With division of power, no governmental department can obtain arbitrary and unlimited strength. To prevent judicial encroachment upon the functions of the legislature, the separation of powers doctrine has been scrupulously observed by the Supreme Court. Courts are not free to substitute their own notions of how best to protect the interests of the nation once Congress has provided a statutory formula for dealing with a perceived federal problem. “It is not for [courts] to compete with Congress or attempt to replace it as the Nation’s law-making body.” Although courts have the power to fashion interstitial federal law to effectuate the policy expressed by


81. Mishkin, supra note 6, at 800. “[E]ffective Constitutionalism requires recognition of power in the federal courts to declare, as a matter of common law or judi-
Congress, they "are not free to 'supplement' Congress' answer so thoroughly that [a statute] becomes meaningless." It is clear that the CWA constitutes the federal law for maintaining the purity of the nation's waters. Because of the CWA's comprehensive regulatory scheme and pervasive enforcement procedures, the federal interest in the nation's water supply is effectively protected. Therefore, the need for a federal common law cause of action solely to further the federal interest in clean water no longer exists.

cial legislation, rules which may be necessary to fill in interstitially [to] effectuate the statutory patterns enacted in the large by Congress." Id. This power arises because "Congress must often deal with . . . problems in a generic fashion." Stewart, supra note 24, at 1230. When "Congress has . . . provided enough federal law . . . appropriate remedies may be fashioned even though they rest on inferences." United States v. Republic Steel Corp., 362 U.S. 482, 492 (1960). When fashioning federal common law, however, courts must follow, not formulate, congressional policy by finding a congressional judgment that federal law should govern. Competence of Federal Courts, supra note 6, at 1090; Federal Common Law, supra note 6, at 1522.

"The judicial function to be exercised in construing a statute is limited to ascertaining the intention of the legislature therein expressed." Ebert v. Poston, 266 U.S. 548, 554 (1924). As the Illinois Court recognized, the federal common law is controlled by the statutory scheme of Congress, Illinois v. City of Milwaukee, 406 U.S. 91, 102 (1972), and must be consistent with that scheme. Id. at 103-04. The role of the courts in fashioning interstitial federal common law has received considerable attention. See generally R. Crampton, P. Currie, & H. Kay, Conflict of Laws Cases - Comments - Questions 929-50 (2d ed. 1975); Hart & Wechsler, supra note 6, at 756-832; Mishkin, supra note 6; Choice of Law, supra note 6.

82. E.g., Republic Steel Corp. v. Maddox, 379 U.S. 650, 657 (1965); Local 721, United Packinghouse, Food & Allied Workers v. Needham Packing Co., 376 U.S. 247, 250 (1964); Atkinson v. Sinclair Ref. Co., 370 U.S. 238, 241 (1962); Textile Workers Union of America v. Lincoln Mills, 353 U.S. 448, 456-57 (1957); Clearfield Trust Co. v. United States, 318 U.S. 363, 367 (1943); Deitrick v. Greaney, 309 U.S. 190, 200 (1940); Board of Commrs v. United States, 305 U.S. 343, 349 (1939). When the intent of Congress is ambiguous or not readily ascertainable, a court fashioning federal law must make two determinations. First, it must decide whether the act of Congress demonstrates a substantial federal interest in the party's claim requiring the application of federal law. United States v. Little Lake Misere Land Co., 412 U.S. 580, 592-93 (1973); Choice of Law, supra note 6, at 133 n.2, Competence of Federal Courts, supra note 6, at 1099; Rules of Decision, supra note 6, at 1441-42. Second, if the federal interest in the litigation is substantial, the court must then fashion a rule of decision. Mishkin, supra note 6, at 803; Comment, Adopting State Law as the Federal Rule of Decision: A Proposed Test, 43 U. Chi. L. Rev. 823, 825 (1976) [hereinafter cited as Adopting State Law].


84. Train v. City of New York, 420 U.S. 35, 37 (1975); see notes 52-75 supra and accompanying text.

85. Committee for Consideration of Jones Falls Sewage Sys. v. Train, 539 F.2d 1006, 1009 (4th Cir. 1976); Reserve Mining Co. v. EPA, 514 F.2d 492, 532 (8th Cir. 1975), modified on other grounds, 529 F.2d 181 (8th Cir. 1976), F. Grad, supra note 12, § 3.03; Zener, supra note 16, at 790; 1977 Wash. L.Q. 164, 175-77.

86. Under similar regulatory schemes, courts have held that federal common law is preempted. See note 46 supra.
Some courts, however, have ignored the administrative and judicial procedures provided under the CWA and have continued to apply federal common law. In National Sea Clammers Association v. City of New York, for example, the Third Circuit reversed the district court's holding that a federal common law cause of action was not available to private parties. The dispute involved the discharge of nutrient rich sludge by several New Jersey and New York municipalities. The discharge caused a massive increase in algae that, after decomposition, caused damage to marine life upon which the plaintiffs depended for their livelihood. The plaintiffs, however, failed to provide notice of their intent to sue as required by the CWA, thus precluding their injunctive remedy under the Act. The Third Circuit, circumventing this statutory bar, validated the association's federal nuisance cause of action as an alternative basis for injunctive relief and remanded the case to the district court.


89. Id. at 1235-36.

90. Id. at 1224-25. The EPA, the United States Army Corps of Engineers, the New York and New Jersey Departments of Environmental Conservation, and seven New York and New Jersey Sewerage Commissions were named as defendants. Id. at 1222.

91. Id. at 1224-25.

92. Id. at 1225. The CWA requires a citizen to give 60 days notice to the administrator, state officials, and the alleged violator before an action in district court may be commenced. 33 U.S.C. § 1365(b) (1976).

The Third Circuit’s decision to ignore the carefully drafted provisions for injunctive relief goes beyond its limited lawmaking powers and constitutes a judicial incursion into the decision-making powers of a coordinate branch of government. The procedural requirements imposed by Congress were not designed as mere impediments to relief. They embody an explicit congressional policy. The notice requirements were designed to “encourage and provide for agency enforcement” and to prevent inconsistent judicial decrees that might result if both a citizen and the EPA brought actions simultaneously. Prior notice permits the government to institute administrative action against a violator before the notice period expires, thus obviating the need for private litigation. Permitting citizens to bring a federal action unconstrained by the notice requirements defeats the congressional compromise between general public enforcement and central agency control and renders the citizen suit

94. 616 F.2d at 1238.
97. 33 U.S.C. § 1365(b)(1)(B) (1976) (no suit may be initiated if United States is diligently pursuing an action against alleged violator). The potential for inconsistent results is demonstrated by the National Sea Clammers litigation. The EPA brought an enforcement action against one defendant, Westchester County, and obtained an order establishing a schedule for compliance. EPA Petition for Certiorari at 15 n.5, Middlesex County Sewerage Auth. v. National Sea Clammers Ass’n, No. 80-12 (U.S., filed July 3, 1980). If a federal common law injunction is granted, the order procured by the EPA will effectively be overruled. Id.
provisions meaningless. A court is not free to devise its own rules in a statutory field merely because its sense of justice impels it to do so; it "cannot supply what Congress has studiously omitted." Another instance of judicial encroachment upon the legislative scheme is the use of federal common law by some courts to invalidate conduct permitted by the EPA. In National Sea Clammers, for example, the City of New York had obtained a permit from the EPA to dredge and dump spoil in the offshore waters of the Atlantic Ocean. The court, however, ignored the permit and allowed the association to pursue its federal common law cause of action. Courts that have authorized federal common law claims despite a defendant's compliance with EPA regulations have misinterpreted

to promote other, conflicting interests, prescribe[s] with particularity the compass of the legislative aim." Id. at 392.


101. TVA v. Hill, 437 U.S. 153, 195 (1978) ("[I]n our constitutional system the commitment to the separation of powers is too fundamental for us to pre-empt congressional action by judicially decreeing what accords with 'common sense and the public weal.' ").

102. FTC v. Simplicity Pattern Co., 360 U.S. 55, 67 (1959). "In the area covered by [a] statute, it would be no more appropriate to prescribe a different measure of damages than to prescribe a different statute of limitations, or a different class of beneficiaries." Mobil Oil Corp. v. Higginbotham, 436 U.S. 618, 625 (1978). Similarly, courts should not be free to prescribe rules for obtaining a federal injunction different from those prescribed by Congress. 14 B.C. Indus. & Com. L. Rev. 767, 783-84 (1973).


105. 616 F.2d at 1233.
Illinois. Although the Illinois decision recognized that the environmental statutes would not necessarily define the outer boundaries of federal common law,\textsuperscript{106} the Court was merely attempting to provide federal remedies for violations of congressional policy when legislation failed to supply an explicit statutory sanction.\textsuperscript{107} The Court did not create a substantive body of law existing outside of a statute, but an interstitial remedy to effectuate the policy of the FWPCA.\textsuperscript{108} "There is a basic difference between filling a gap left by Congress’ silence and rewriting [standards] that Congress has affirmatively and specifically enacted."\textsuperscript{109} The setting of specific uniform federal standards is the ultimate decision of the EPA pursuant to its congressionally delegated authority.\textsuperscript{110} The substitution of judicially created standards, under the guise of an alternative federal cause of action, neither was intended by, nor is consistent with, the CWA.\textsuperscript{111} Furthermore, it is an invasion of Congress’ power for a court to find conduct authorized by the EPA illegal.\textsuperscript{112}

\textsuperscript{106} Illinois v. City of Milwaukee, 406 U.S. 91, 103 n.5 (1972).
\textsuperscript{109} Mobil Oil Corp. v. Higginbotham, 436 U.S. 618, 625 (1978).
\textsuperscript{112} See New England Legal Foundation v. Costle, 475 F. Supp. 425, 440-41 (D. Conn. 1979). In Costle, plaintiffs alleged that the defendant power station maintained a federal common law nuisance by burning high sulphur coal. The court noted, however, that the relief sought was, "in effect, an attack upon the validity of the
The danger presented by this type of judicial activism has not gone unnoticed. In Committee for Consideration of Jones Falls Sewage System v. Train, the court stated that it would be an anomaly to hold that there was a body of federal common law which proscribes conduct which the [CWA] legitimates. . . . While the state courts are free to apply state nuisance law more rigidly, a federal court . . . may not turn to a supposed body of federal common law to impose stricter standards than the statute provides.

Moreover, a court that orders the immediate cessation of polluting conduct destroys the economic considerations built into the CWA permit system. The result may be economic harm as detrimental to the general welfare as the pollution itself. Courts should not

EPA-approved variance . . . [and thus] a challenge to the legality of the limitation itself. Id. at 441 n.21. Furthermore, the court noted that, under the Clean Air Act, 42 U.S.C. § 7426 (1976), the plaintiffs could have achieved administratively what they sought under the federal common law. 475 F. Supp. at 441 n.21. Similarly, persons injured by water pollution have a right to proceed administratively to attack any permit or standard set by the EPA, 33 U.S.C. § 1369(b) (1976), and to obtain judicial review of any final administrative decision. Id. Failure to comply with the administrative procedures bars judicial review. Id. § 1369(b)(2). Therefore, federal common law actions circumventing the administrative procedures of the CWA should be precluded. Zener, supra note 16, at 790 & n.460; see McKart v. United States, 395 U.S. 185, 193-95 (1969) (courts should not supply judicial relief when adequate administrative remedies exist); L. Jaffe, Judicial Control of Administrative Action 425 (1965) ("the exhaustion doctrine [of administrative remedies] is . . . an expression of executive and administrative autonomy").


114. 539 F.2d 1006 (4th Cir. 1976). In Jones Falls, city and state officials, operating a public waste treatment plant, permitted sewage to overflow. Id. at 1007. Because the overflow did not violate the limitations of their CWA permit, no claim under the statute was possible. Id. at 1010.

115. Id. at 1009 (footnote omitted).


117. Cf. Harrison v. Indiana Auto Shredders Co., 528 F.2d 1107, 1121 (7th Cir. 1975) (permanent injunction not granted because it would close auto shredding plant important to local economy); Stockdale v. Agrico Chem. Co., 340 F. Supp. 244, 261 (N.D. Iowa 1972) (permanent injunction not granted because it would close phos-
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disrupt the careful balance of interests entrusted to the expert administrative processes of the EPA. 116

The citizen suit provision for injunctive relief must be deemed the exclusive federal remedy for pollution abatement. 119 The CWA, however, does not supply a cause of action for damages incurred as a result of pollution. 120 Nevertheless, Congress’ failure to provide for compensatory relief should not justify a reflexive creation of a federal common law action. A common sense reading of the statute’s savings clause, and its legislative history, indicates that Congress did provide a mechanism for compensating injuries caused by polluting activities. The savings clause of the citizens’ suit provisions declares that the CWA shall not “restrict any right which any person . . . may have under any statute or common law.” 121 The legislative history of the clause states that “[c]ompliance with [the] . . . Act would not be a

phate plant important to local economy); Boomer v. Atlantic Cement Co., 26 N.Y.2d 219, 223, 257 N.E.2d 870, 872, 309 N.Y.S.2d 312, 315 (1970) (permanent injunction not granted because it would close $45,000,000 cement plant employing 300 persons).

118. See Note, Federal Common Law Suits to Abate Interstate Air Pollution, 4 Harv. Envt’l L. Rev. 117, 131 (1980) [hereinafter cited as Air Pollution]. EPA regulations based on the “best available technology” should not be ignored in favor of common law theories of nuisance. Id. Water pollution control requires “a complex balancing analysis of factors that include economic, technical, and other considerations” requiring scientific expertise. 118 Cong. Rec. 33701 (1972), reprinted in 1 Legislative History, supra note 1, at 181 (remarks of Sen. Muskie); see Crampton & Boyer, Citizen Suits in the Environmental Field: Peril or Promise?, 2 Ecol. L.Q. 407, 413-14 (1972). Litigation without prior administrative action is not the most rational approach to pollution control, Hines, supra note 11, at 200-01, because nuisance law does not provide an adequate conceptual framework for dealing with the complex problems associated with water pollution. Interstate Pollution, supra note 3, at 1451-52; see Exxon Corp. v. City of New York, 548 F.2d 1088, 1096 (2d Cir. 1977) (analysis of technological and scientific criterion of Clean Air Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 7401-7640 (Supp. II 1978), sensibly delegated to EPA); Boomer v. Atlantic Cement Co., 26 N.Y.2d 219, 223, 257 N.E.2d 870, 871, 309 N.Y.S.2d 312, 314-15 (1970) (courts lack adequate resources to develop a comprehensive means of controlling pollution). Because the EPA has “unique experience and expertise,” American Meat Inst. v. EPA, 526 F.2d 442, 450 n.16 (7th Cir. 1975), courts should defer to its specialized knowledge in determining effluent standards and limitations. See United States v. Western P.R.R., 352 U.S. 59, 64-65 (1956) (role of judiciary better suited to reviewing legal issues after factual determinations have been made by federal agencies).

119. See notes 70-74, 87-118 supra and accompanying text.


defense to a common law action for pollution damages." Such a result could only be obtained if Congress intended the application of standards of conduct other than those fixed by the CWA. Under the statute, state law is not only expressly preserved, it is the only law permitted to impose more stringent standards of conduct than those promulgated by the EPA. This realization, coupled with the CWA's policy to preserve the state's primary role in controlling pollution, indicates that application of state common law was intended for parties seeking damages.

Furthermore, savings clauses can only preserve rights and remedies antedating a statute. The CWA could not have saved a federal common law cause of action for damages that did not exist. Unlike the well-established federal common law created by the Supreme Court to protect the quasi-sovereign interests of the states from interstate pollution, there was no established federal right to seek damages for polluting conduct when the CWA was enacted. Therefore,


123. 33 U.S.C. §§ 1365(e), 1370 (1976); see H.R. Rep. No. 911, 92d Cong., 2d Sess. 136 (1972), reprinted in 1 Legislative History, supra note 1, at 823 ("Committee rejected in most instances suggestions for preemption by the Federal Government and preempted the States only where the situation warranted it based upon urgent need for uniformity such as in section [1322(o)] relating to marine sanitation devices.").


127. See pt. III infra.

128. Even if Illinois v. City of Milwaukee, 406 U.S. 91 (1972), established a private federal common law cause of action for water pollution, see notes 106-108 supra
in drafting the savings clause, it is logical to assume that Congress was referring to state, not federal, law.

Arguably, the phrase "any . . . common law" is sufficiently ambiguous to present a choice of law question. In deciding whether rules of federal common law should be fashioned, . . . a significant conflict between some federal policy or interest and the use of state law . . . must first be specifically shown.' Absent such a conflict, state law applies.

The CWA clearly provides that state law meeting federal minimum standards is not only consistent with, but, under certain circumstances, actually supplants federal law. Moreover, utilization of state law to determine damages has little or no effect upon the federal regulatory scheme. A claim for damages, unlike enforcement and accompanying text, Congress could not have intended to save it because Illinois was decided after passage of the CWA. The CWA was passed by the Senate on November 2, 1971, 117 Cong. Rec. 38888 (1971), and by the House on March 29, 1972. 118 Cong. Rec. 10831 (1972). Illinois was handed down on April 24, 1972. 406 U.S. at 91.

130. Miree v. DeKalb County, 433 U.S. 25, 31 (1977) (quoting Wallis v. Pan Am. Petroleum Corp., 384 U.S. 63, 68 (1966)) (emphasis omitted). State law is presumed to apply unless federal concerns would conflict with its use. See Choice of Law, supra note 6, at 149 n.67. "[T]he inner logic of the federal system requires state solutions whenever they are feasible." Federal Common Law, supra note 6, at 1517 (footnote omitted); see Mishkin, supra note 6, at 814 & n.64; Wechsler, The Political Safeguards of Federalism: The Role of the States in the Composition and Selection of National Government, 54 Colum. L. Rev. 543, 544-45 (1954); Competence of Federal Courts, supra note 6, at 1085.

131. United States v. Little Lake Misere Land Co., 412 U.S. 580, 591-92 (1973); Wechsler, supra note 130, at 544; Choice of Law, supra note 6, at 149 n.67. Adopting State Law, supra note 82, at 824-27. "That Congress may have constitutional power to make federal law displacing state substantive policy does not imply an equal range of power for federal judges." Mishkin, Some Further Last Words on Erie—The Thread, 87 Harv. L. Rev. 1682, 1683 (1974). "The political logic of federalism . . . supports placing the burden of persuasion on those urging national action." Wechsler, supra note 130, at 545. Only when a substantial federal interest exists in the litigation will state law be displaced. Choice of Law, supra note 6, at 144-45.

actions brought pursuant to the CWA, fails to implicate directly the federal interest in controlling water pollution. A damage action, presenting factual questions of injury and causation, is far removed from the regulation of water pollution. The question whether private parties may obtain damages involves the federal interest only insofar as it might be thought to advance indirectly pollution control.

The federal interest in a damage action, however, is so remote and speculative that no significant conflict exists and use of state law is appropriate.


134. J. Krier, Environmental Law and Policy 209-10, 215-16 (1971); W. Prosser, supra note 11, § 88; Zener, supra note 16, at 788; Nuances of Nuisance, supra note 11, at 66-70. Generally, to recover damages in private nuisance the plaintiff must show (1) that a substantial interference with the use and enjoyment of his land occurred; (2) that the defendant's conduct was unreasonable or intentional; and (3) that the defendant's actions were the proximate cause of the interference. Note, State Air Pollution Control Legislation, 9 B.C. Ind. & Comm. L. Rev. 712, 717 (1968).

135. See Miree v. DeKalb County, 433 U.S. 25 (1977). The Miree Court found that, although a damage award might further the federal interest in aviation safety, it was "far too speculative, far too remote a possibility to justify the application of federal law to [an area] essentially of local concern." Id. at 32-33 (quoting Bank of Am. Nat'l Trust & Sav. Ass'n v. Parnell, 352 U.S. 29, 33-34 (1956)). Similarly, pollution injuries, like other essentially local private disputes, present no substantial issues of federal law. See Ohio v. Wyandotte Chems. Corp., 401 U.S. 493, 497 (1971); Woods & Reed, supra note 40, at 708. Absent a substantial federal interest, "[t]he determination by federal courts of the scope of [private remedies] involves the creation of a body of common law analogous to that repudiated in Erie." Carlson v. Green, 446 U.S. 14, 39 (1980) (Rehnquist, J., dissenting).

136. Parsell v. Shell Oil Co., 421 F. Supp. 1275, 1282 (D. Conn. 1976), aff'd mem. sub nom. East End Yacht Club, Inc. v. Shell Oil Co., 573 F.2d 1289 (2d Cir. 1977). The Supreme Court has concluded that, when private litigation essentially involves an area traditionally regulated by the state, such as pollution, Huron Portland Cement Co. v. City of Detroit, 362 U.S. 440, 442 (1960), "[t]he exercise of federal supremacy is not lightly to be presumed." New York State Dept. of Social Servs. v. Dublino, 413 U.S. 405, 413 (1973) (quoting Schwartz v. Texas, 344 U.S. 199, 203 (1952)); see Note, The Preemption Doctrine: Shifting Perspectives on Federalism and the Burger Court, 75 Colum. L. Rev. 623, 642, 647, 653 (1975); Choice of Law, supra note 6, at 143. "Whether latent federal power should be exercised to displace state law is primarily a decision for Congress." Miree v. DeKalb County, 433 U.S. 25, 32 (1977) (quoting Wallis v. Pan Am. Petroleum Corp., 384 U.S. 63, 69 (1966)). In Miree, the Court held that, because Congress had not provided a federal remedy, no federal common law remedy should be created. Id. at 32-33; see Carlson v. Green, 446 U.S. 14, 40 (Rehnquist, J., dissenting).

Some courts, in considering whether federal or state law should apply to damage actions brought pursuant to the CWA's savings clause, have selected federal law because it supplies a uniform rule of decision.\textsuperscript{138} This approach fails to recognize that

there is no federal interest in uniformity for its own sake. The fact that application of state law may produce a variety of results is of no moment. It is in the nature of a federal system that different states will apply different rules of law, based on their individual perceptions of what is in the best interests of their citizens.\textsuperscript{139}

Before a court may fashion a uniform federal rule of decision, it must study the policies underlying a federal statute to determine whether the "absence [of uniformity] would threaten the smooth functioning of those consensual processes that federal . . . law is chiefly designed to promote."\textsuperscript{140}

The policies of the CWA are clearly designed to foster state law;\textsuperscript{141} nonuniformity is built into the statute.\textsuperscript{142} In a similar choice of law situation, the Supreme Court analyzed whether the policies of the Labor Management Relations Act required a uniform time limitation on actions brought under the provisions of the Act.\textsuperscript{143} In applying state law, the Court said that

federal labor law is chiefly designed to promote . . . the formation of the collective agreement and the private settlement of disputes under it. For the most part, statutes of limitations come into play only when these processes have already broken down. Lack of uniformity in this area is therefore unlikely to frustrate in any important way the achievement of any significant goal of labor policy.\textsuperscript{144}
Pollution damage actions present a similar choice of law problem. A damage action results only when the federal regulatory process has failed to abate pollution, the primary goal of the CWA. Although damage actions may have a deterrent effect, they do not stop pollution; the pollutor merely pays the judgment as a license to continue polluting. Disparate results in this area will not frustrate any policies or goals of the CWA.


The federal common law adopted in Illinois to protect the federal interest in the purity of the nation's water has now been supplanted by the CWA. Another independent federal interest recognized in Illinois, the interest in maintaining state sovereignty within a federal system, has not been systematically addressed by federal legislation. This federal interest, however, has long been within the purview of the federal common law and continues to provide states with a unique cause of action, a parens patriae suit, to protect their quasi-sovereign interests in interstate resources.

147. See pts. I(B), II supra.
149. See, e.g., Vermont v. New York, 417 U.S. 270 (1974) (per curiam); Texas v. New Jersey, 379 U.S. 674 (1965); New Jersey v. New York, 283 U.S. 336 (1931); Connecticut v. Massachusetts, 282 U.S. 660 (1931); Kansas v. Colorado, 185 U.S. 125 (1902); Missouri v. Illinois, 180 U.S. 208 (1901); Rhode Island v. Massachusetts, 37 U.S. (12 Pet.) 657 (1838). See generally The Federalist No. 80 (A. Hamilton), at 516-17 (Modern Library ed. 1937); Friendly, supra note 6, at 408 n.119; Hill, supra note 6, at 1030-32; Monaghan, supra note 6, at 13-14 & n.72; Scott, The Role of the Supreme Court of the United States in the Settlement of Inter-State Disputes, 15 Geo. L.J. 146, 162-63 (1927); Woods & Reed, supra note 40, at 708-09; Federal Common Law, supra note 6, at 1520; Original Jurisdiction, supra note 37, at 681.
151. E.g., Georgia v. Pennsylvania R.R., 324 U.S. 439, 447 (1945) (interstate transportation); Wyoming v. Colorado, 286 U.S. 494, 509 (1932) (interstate water); Pennsylvania v. West Virginia, 252 U.S. 553, 592 (1923) (interstate natural gas); New York v. New Jersey, 256 U.S. 296, 301-02 (1921) (interstate water); Georgia v. Ten-
The use of a *parens patriae* suit to protect quasi-sovereign interests requires a state to show that it is asserting the general rights of the state and not the private interests of its citizens. The state must have "a direct interest of its own and not merely seek recovery for the benefit of individuals who are the real parties in interest." Such a distinct interest arises only when the injury seriously jeopardizes the health, comfort, and welfare of the state as a whole. Historically, when such an injury was demonstrated, the state, as a matter of sovereign right, was permitted to vindicate its interests in the Supreme Court.

"Interstate common law" was developed by the Supreme Court as an equitable rule of decision for adjudicating disputes between neighboring states concerning their respective quasi-sovereign interests in interstate resources. Although states may freely utilize
resources within their borders, the ecological rights of one state preclude the detrimental use by another of the resources shared by all. When one state’s exercise of its sovereign powers injured the quasi-sovereign interests of another, the Supreme Court, possessed of exclusive original jurisdiction, provided impartial federal rules of decision to adjudicate the conflicting interests.

Similar reasoning was adopted for interstate pollution disputes between a state and a citizen of another state brought under the Court’s original, but nonexclusive, jurisdiction. In Georgia v. Tennessee Copper Co., for example, the Court found that Georgia’s quasi-sovereign interests in its environment should not be circumscribed by the inadequate pollution laws of its neighboring state. Conversely, the laws of the complaining state should not prevail over the economic and social policy decisions that permitted the defendant’s conduct. The basic tenets of federalism demand that no state “legislate except with reference to its own jurisdiction.”

Original Jurisdiction, supra note 11, at 708-18.


159. Kansas v. Colorado, 206 U.S. 46, 97 (1907) (“One cardinal rule, underlining all the relations of the States to each other, is that of equality of right.”).

160. E.g., Connecticut v. Massachusetts, 282 U.S. 660, 670 (1931); New York v. New Jersey, 256 U.S. 296, 309 (1921); Kansas v. Colorado, 206 U.S. 46, 97 (1907). “[W]henever . . . the action of one State reaches through the agency of natural laws into the territory of another State, the question of the extent . . . of the rights of the two States becomes a matter of justiciable dispute.” Id. at 97-98.

161. 206 U.S. 230 (1907). The State of Georgia sought the abatement of damaging smoke emissions from defendant’s out-of-state factory. Id. at 236-37.

162. Id. at 237. Because of potential parochialism, Georgia could not have been constitutionally compelled to seek relief in the courts of Tennessee regardless of the remedies available. Ohio v. Wyandotte Chems. Corp., 401 U.S. 493, 500 (1971); Wisconsin v. Pelican Ins. Co., 127 U.S. 265, 289 (1888); Chisholm v. Georgia, 2 U.S. (2 Dall.) 419, 475 (1793).

163. Committee for Consideration of Jones Falls Sewage Sys. v. Train, 539 F.2d 1006, 1008 (4th Cir. 1976); Texas v. Pankey, 441 F.2d 236, 241-42 (10th Cir. 1971); The Federalist No. 80 (A. Hamilton); Friendly, supra note 6, at 408 n.119; Monaghan, supra note 6, at 12-14. The vested interests of either state would, of course, find their expression in state law. Woods & Reed, supra note 40, at 710. The offending state would surely want to protect the economic well-being of its citizens from a damaging injunction, while the victim state would surely want to protect the health and comfort of its citizens. The intergovernmental conflict that exists in such suits should be resolved by resort to an impartial arbiter. Woods & Reed, supra note 40, at 710-11; Interstate Pollution, supra note 3, at 1449; e.g., Nebraska v. Wyoming, 325 U.S. 589, 608 (1945), modified on other grounds, 345 U.S 981 (1953); North Dakota v. Minnesota, 263 U.S. 365, 372-74 (1923).

164. Bonaparte v. Tax Court, 104 U.S. 592, 594 (1881); accord, Kansas v. Colorado, 206 U.S. 46, 98 (1907). "Each State stands on the same level with all the rest.
The *Tennessee Copper* rationale remains an important principle of interstate relations. Interstate pollution still presents difficult questions of conflicting state economic and social policies.\(^{165}\) Neither state should have these important policy decisions made for them by their neighboring state’s government or courts.\(^{166}\) The submission of these conflicts to the impartial rules of federal law is both a necessary rule of federalism\(^{167}\) and a practical vehicle for maintaining national peace and harmony.\(^{168}\) The *Illinois* decision simply reaffirmed the basic premise of *Tennessee Copper* that interstate pollution disputes implicating a state’s quasi-sovereign interests be decided under federal law.\(^{169}\) The only difference was diversion of these disputes to federal district courts.\(^{170}\)

The passage of the CWA raises the question whether common law derived from our constitutional structure of government survives a legislative act of Congress. Clearly, Congress may abrogate or sup-

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It can impose its own legislation on no one of the others, and is bound to yield its own views to none.” *Id.* at 97-98.

165. Stewart, *supra* note 24, at 1227-28; Woods & Reed, *supra* note 40, at 710; *Interstate Pollution, supra* note 3, at 1449; *Air Pollution, supra* note 118, at 117.


167. Wisconsin v. Pelican Ins. Co., 127 U.S. 265, 289 (1889); Chisholm v. Georgia, 2 U.S. (2 Dall.) 419, 475-76 (1793); Hart & Wechsler, *supra* note 6, at 18-19; Woods & Reed, *supra* note 40, at 705-06. The grant of original jurisdiction over disputes between a state and a citizen of another state implied federal power to create substantive rules of decision when the nature of the dispute made the application of state law inappropriate. *See Friendly, supra* note 6, at 405 n.119; Hill, *supra* note 6, at 1030-32; Scott, *supra* note 149, at 163-64; Stewart, *supra* note 24, at 1229; Woods & Reed, *supra* note 40, at 708-11; *Federal Common Law, supra* note 6, at 1520. Therefore, “If federal common law and not the varying common law of the individual States is . . . entitled and necessary to be recognized as a basis for dealing . . . with the environmental rights of a State against improper impairment by sources outside its domain.” *Illinois v. City of Milwaukee, 406 U.S. 91, 108 n.9 (1972)* (quoting Texas v. Pankey, 441 F.2d 236, 241 (10th Cir. 1971)).

168. Georgia v. Pennsylvania R.R., 324 U.S. 439, 450 (1945) (Original jurisdiction was designed “so that adequate machinery might be available for the peaceful settlement of disputes between States and between a State and a citizen of another State.”); Georgia v. Tennessee Copper Co., 206 U.S. 230, 237 (1907) (“When the States by their union made the forcible abatement of outside nuisances impossible to each, they did not thereby agree to submit to whatever might be done. They did not renounce the possibility of making reasonable demands on the ground of their remaining quasi-sovereign interests; and the alternative to force is a suit in this court.”); *see* The Federalist No. 80 (A. Hamilton), at 516-17 (Modern Library ed. 1937); Scott, *supra* note 149, at 158-59.


170. *Id.* at 100.
plant established common law rights and duties. Statutes that divest "preexisting rights or privileges will not be applied to the sovereign," however, "without a clear expression or implication to that effect." Interstate common law actions are not expressly precluded by the CWA. Indeed, they are implicitly preserved by the CWA's savings clause. Legislative debates also demonstrate that Congress specifically focused on the interstate common law of nuisance and concluded that enactment of the CWA would not limit or preclude this cause of action.


173. Id. (quoting United States v. Wittek, 337 U.S. 346, 359 (1949)).


175. 118 Cong. Rec. 10780 (1972), reprinted in 1 Legislative History, supra note 1, at 688 (remarks of Rep. Dingell).

176. Id. at 33705-09, reprinted in 1 Legislative History, supra note 1, at 191-94 (remarks of Sen. Griffin). The legislative debates indicate a congressional awareness that "[f]ederal courts have . . . traditionally upheld the right of the States to protect the health and safety of their citizens." Id. at 10773, reprinted in 1 Legislative History, supra note 1, at 676 (remarks of Rep. Fraser). In fact, concern was expressed that the passage of the CWA would alter the outcome of Reserve Mining Co. v. EPA, 514 F.2d 492 (8th Cir. 1975), a suit based, in part, on interstate common law. Id. at 33705, reprinted in 1 Legislative History, supra note 1, at 191 (remarks of Sen. Griffin). Senator Hart replied that "the suit now pending against the Reserve Mining Co., under the Refuse Act of 1899 will in no way be affected nor will any of the other counts under the existing Federal Water Pollution Control Act or other law." Id. at 33713, reprinted in 1 Legislative History, supra note 1, at 211 (remarks of Sen. Hart) (emphasis added). This view was shared by Senator Muskie. Id. at 33706, reprinted in 1 Legislative History, supra note 300, at 192-93 (remarks of Sen. Muskie); Senator Muskie's views, as principal author of the CWA, are entitled to substantial weight. Simpson v. United States, 435 U.S. 6, 13 (1978); E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Co. v. Train, 430 U.S. 112, 129 (1977). In fact, in an interstate pollution
In the absence of an explicit congressional declaration to preclude previously existent common law actions, the Supreme Court has concluded that such a right "is not to be abrogated 'unless it be found . . . so repugnant to the statute that the survival of such right would in effect deprive the subsequent statute of its efficacy; in other words, render its provisions nugatory.'" Interstate common law presents no "irreconcilable conflict" with the policies of the CWA. The CWA's policies to "preserve and protect the primary . . . rights of States" are, in fact, furthered by interstate common law. Although the CWA gives states the unique right to promulgate and enforce more stringent standards than those imposed by the EPA, the Act does not provide a federal remedy for violations of those standards by transboundary pollution. Far from conflicting with the CWA, interstate common law serves as a vital supplementary mechanism for protecting states' quasi-sovereign interests in interstate water.

The Illinois litigation presently before the Supreme Court dem-

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180. 33 U.S.C. § 1370. This section has been held to allow enforcement actions brought under state and federal common law. Illinois v. Outboard Marine Corp., 619 F.2d 623, 630 (7th Cir. 1980), petition for cert. filed, 49 U.S.L.W. 3043 (U.S. July 25, 1980) (No. 80-126); United States Steel Corp. v. Train, 556 F.2d 822, 830 (7th Cir. 1977); Homestake Mining Co. v. EPA, 477 F. Supp. 1279, 1283-84 (D.S.D. 1979). The Seventh Circuit has found that 33 U.S.C. § 1370 (1976), in conjunction with 33 U.S.C. § 1365(e) (1976), "suggests, if it does not require, the conclusion that Congress did not intend to preempt the federal common law" applicable to states. Illinois v. City of Milwaukee, 599 F.2d 151, 162 (7th Cir. 1979), cert. granted, 445 U.S. 926 (1980) (No. 79-408).
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onstrates the utility and continued necessity of interstate common law. Pursuant to provisions of the CWA, both Illinois and Wisconsin instituted their own water pollution control programs. Both programs complied with minimum federal standards. In fact, Illinois promulgated water quality standards for its portion of Lake Michigan that were more stringent than those set by the EPA. Wisconsin, however, did not set similarly high standards of pollution control for waters within its jurisdiction. When lake currents carried pollutants from Wisconsin to Illinois, the purpose and effect of Illinois' legislation was defeated. The CWA, in addressing the problem of conflicting state programs, provides that a state whose waters are affected by discharges in another state may only recommend that the other state adopt more effective water quality standards or impose higher effluent limitations in particular permits. Neither the federal courts nor the federal administrator are authorized to reject a state permit or a state water quality standard that is in compliance with the terms of the CWA and existing EPA regulations. Therefore, the CWA, like the FWPCA before it, fails to provide a means of

188. See Brief for Respondents at 23-25, City of Milwaukee v. Illinois, No. 79-408 (U.S., filed Sept. 22, 1980). The Illinois litigation illustrates the state’s vulnerability to its neighbor’s intrastate conduct. The State of Illinois’ shoreline on Lake Michigan is located between Indiana’s vast industrial belt (the steel mills of Gary, Hammond, and East Chicago) and the Milwaukee metropolitan area. Id. at 21. The distance between these areas is less than sixty miles. Id. Pollutants dumped into the lake easily flow in either direction into Illinois’ waters. Id. at 22.
189. 33 U.S.C. § 1342(b)(3) (1976) (state may request public hearings and urge imposition of higher standards); id. § 1342(b)(5) (state may request administrator to veto permits and formulate new permit); id. § 1313(c) (state may request higher standards as necessary to protect state).
WATER POLLUTION

The failure of the FWPCA to provide an effective mechanism for protecting a state’s quasi-sovereign interests was the primary impetus for the Illinois decision. Illinois v. City of Milwaukee, 406 U.S. 91, 104 (1972). The failure of the CWA to address this issue adequately was crucial to the Seventh Circuit’s decision to grant injunctive relief under interstate common law. Illinois v. City of Milwaukee, 599 F.2d 151, 163, 165 (7th Cir. 1979), cert. granted, 445 U.S. 921 (1980) (No. 79-405).

Brief for the United States as Amicus Curiae at 31, City of Milwaukee v. Illinois, No. 79-408 (U.S., filed Sept. 3, 1980); Water Pollution Disputes, supra note 1, at 160-61. See also Stewart, supra note 24, at 1229-30 (pollution spillovers require federal court adjudication until addressed by federal legislation, Air Pollution, supra note 118, at 143 (problem of conflicting state pollution standards under Clean Air Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 7401-7642 (Supp. III 1979), could be solved through use of interstate common law).

Transboundary spillovers of pollutants inherently present the potential for interstate friction. Stewart, supra note 24, at 1228-30; Woods & Reed, supra note 40, at 710-11. Although actual armed intervention is inconceivable, dramatic political repercussions could be equally dangerous to interstate relations. Brief for Respondents at 13, 34-35, City of Milwaukee v. Illinois, No. 79-408 (U.S., filed Sept. 22, 1980). In fact, to defeat the effect of the Illinois decision, Wisconsin Congressmen made repeated attempts to legislatively overturn the ruling by amending the FWPCA. Id. at 78 n.16.


See W. Prosser, supra note 11, § 88, at 587-88. To recover for a public nuisance a plaintiff must show damages different in kind from those suffered by the public. Burgess v. Tamano, 370 F. Supp. 247, 250 (D. Me. 1973); Restatement (Second) of Torts § 821C (1979).
basis in a Supreme Court decision in which federal common law was utilized to resolve an interstate water dispute between private individuals. In *Hinderlider v. La Plata River & Cherry Creek Ditch Co.* 197 Colorado and New Mexico had a compact detailing their respective rights to water in an interstate river. 198 The La Plata Company’s rights in the river water, however, antedated the compact, and they brought suit to prevent interference with those rights. 199 The Supreme Court held that federal common law supplied the rule of decision despite the absence of a state as a party. 200 In reaching this conclusion, the Court recognized that adjudication of the private litigants rights to the river water would directly impact the quasi-sovereign interests of both New Mexico and Colorado. 201 The interests of the states were so inexorably bound to those of the private company it was as though the state were a party to the action. 202 Thus, the Court, in requiring the use of federal common law, looked to the private litigant’s implication of his state’s quasi-sovereign interests and not solely to the interstate nature of the dispute. 203 Although it may be rare, when the public’s health, comfort or welfare are endangered, and the private individual seeks vindication of the general wrong, the assertion of the state’s quasi-sovereign rights would be well-founded, and an interstate common law cause of action should be available. 204

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197. 304 U.S. 92 (1938).
198. Id. at 95-96. The interstate compact between Colorado and New Mexico provided, *inter alia*, that, to make the most efficient use of the La Plata River during the summer months, the state administrators would have authority to direct the entire flow to each state on an alternating basis. Id. at 108.
199. La Plata River & Cherry Creek Ditch Co. v. Hinderlider, 93 Colo. 128, 25 P.2d 187 (1933), rev’d, 304 U.S. 92 (1938). The La Plata Company objected to the use of the river water under the interstate compact as it deprived the company of water for periods of 10 days at a time. Id. at 132, 239 P.2d at 188. The Colorado Supreme Court found that the company had a vested right to the river water and held that the state could not barter this right away in a compact that failed to provide compensation. Id.
200. 304 U.S. at 110-11.
201. Id.
202. Id. at 111. It has been noted that the cases the Court relied on, id. n.13, are not squarely on point. Hill, supra note 6, at 1075 n.246.
203. See Hill, supra note 6, at 1076 (choice of law in *Hinderlider* required by Constitution).
204. Ordinarily, a state will wish to bring suit, thus precluding intervention by its citizens. New Jersey v. New York, 345 U.S. 369, 374 (1953). “An intervenor whose state is already a party should have the burden of showing some compelling interest in his own right, apart from his interest in a class with all other citizens and creatures of the state, which interest is not properly represented by the state.” Id. at 373. A suit by a private individual would most often occur when his state is polluting or permitting the pollution of an interstate body of water, to the detriment of the general welfare. E.g., Hinderlider v. La Plata River & Cherry Creek Ditch Co., 304
A remaining question is whether federal common law should apply to municipalities. A municipality possesses no sovereign status and must be viewed as a private entity. Possessing the practical advantage of asserting the collective rights of its citizens, however, a municipality may have less difficulty persuading a federal court that the controversy implicates the rights of the state.

Two recent decisions upheld a municipality’s ability to pursue federal nuisance actions. In City of Evansville v. Kentucky Liquid Recycling, Inc., the Seventh Circuit validated the city’s cause of action for damages resulting from transboundary pollution of the municipal water supply. The court acknowledged that the CWA evinced no congressional intent to provide for a private cause of action for damages; the citizen suit provisions were exclusive. The court, however, relying on Hinderlider v. La Plata River & Cherry Creek Ditch Co., applied interstate common law, reasoning that “the interests of the state in this interstate pollution dispute are implicated in the same way such interests were implicated in Illinois v. Milwaukee.” The court’s rationale for invoking interstate common law, however, is vitiated by its own finding that “plaintiffs do not seek to represent the ‘quasi-sovereign interest’ or the ecological rights . . . of the state of Indiana.” In a better reasoned opinion, the District Court of New Jersey specifically relied upon a township’s well-founded assertion of its state’s quasi-sovereign interest in granting interstate common law relief. The Township of

U.S. 92 (1938) (state “bartered” away quasi-sovereign interests to detriment of its citizens); Township of Long Beach v. City of New York, 445 F. Supp. 1203 (D.N.J. 1978) (state permitted local sewage districts to pollute coastal waters to detriment of its own economy). In such instances, the private suit should be allowed because the state has failed in its parens patriae role.


207. See Air Pollution, supra note 118, at 134.

208. 604 F.2d 1008 (7th Cir. 1979), cert. denied, 444 U.S. 1025 (1980).

209. Id. at 1019. The defendants allegedly discharged toxic chemicals into the sewer system, which eventually flowed into the Ohio River, the source of the plaintiffs’ drinking supply. Id. at 1010.

210. Id. at 1012-16.

211. 304 U.S. 92 (1938). See generally 1A J. Moore, Federal Practice c 0.320 (3d ed. 1980).

212. 604 F.2d at 1018.

213. Id. at 1017 (footnotes omitted).
Long Beach v. City of New York dispute centered upon the same pollution that generated the National Sea Clammers litigation. Unlike the claim brought by the National Sea Clammers Association, the township's claim rested on its assertion of the state's quasi-sovereign interest in the ocean waters. The court stated that, although "the decision in Illinois v. City of Milwaukee should not be extended to encompass an action by a private person," the significant interests asserted by the township implicated the entire state, and were therefore sufficient to uphold the interstate common law claim. It is apparent from the nature and extent of the pollution involved that more than the independent interests of the township's citizens were involved. The township claimed that if the pollution of the coastal waters of New Jersey continued, it would result in severe economic injury to the state as a whole. The court's finding of a statewide impact demonstrates that the township's claim not only implicated its proprietary rights, but in fact, involved the general health and welfare of the entire state. This, and any similar finding by a court, would justify use of interstate common law.

Conclusion

Utilization of federal common law in derogation of the CWA's statutory scheme constitutes a clear violation of the separation of powers doctrine. Once Congress has supplied the legislative policies and national priorities in a statute, federal courts must adhere to its provisions. With the enactment of the CWA, Congress has clearly spoken on how best to protect the nation's waters. Federal courts have no common law powers to supercede this congressional mandate.

The CWA, however, fails to include an effective statutory solution to the problem of conflicting state water quality standards in interstate water. This serious deficiency in the federal regulatory scheme justifies the continued existence of a unique type of federal common law. Interstate common law, designed specifically to protect quasi-sovereign interests in interstate resources, was preserved by the

215. High Water Mark, supra note 3, at 10102.
216. 445 F. Supp. at 1214.
217. Id. at 1213 (citation omitted).
218. Id. at 1214.
219. Id.
220. Id. ("The interests sought to be protected herein are ones which affect the entire state, both aesthetically and economically.").
CWA and provides a flexible and effective means of filling the void in the statute. Interstate pollution will continue to create tensions between states, a problem that can only be authoritatively resolved by federal intervention. Until Congress definitively addresses this problem, interstate common law must remain available to compel what interstate compromise fails to provide.

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