

Today is Wednesday, August 08, 2007

Originally published Tuesday, August 07, 2007

Updated Tuesday, August 07, 2007

DDT dumped off Palos Verdes Peninsula still affects food chain

Heal the Bay calls for more fish advisories and rules in light of study.

By Kristin S. Agostoni

Staff Writer

Environmentalists are urging state and federal regulators to act quickly now that a study has confirmed fish off the Palos Verdes Peninsula continue to carry traces of the banned pesticide DDT.

The report found evidence of high-levels of contamination in the Palos Verdes and San Pedro Bay areas more than three decades after federal regulators prohibited DDT from being discharged into county storm drains.

A 100-ton deposit of the pollutant that settled into the ocean floor off White Point continues to plague fish in that area, particularly bottom-

dwellers such as white croaker.

And traces of DDT and banned PCBs, a common electrical insulator, were discovered to be higher in those areas than detected in the Santa Monica Bay and Orange and Ventura counties, the study found.

The analysis released Monday provides the most comprehensive information to date on the effects of the dumping by the defunct Montrose Chemical Co. and other industries from the 1940s to the 1970s.

With more recent data now available from a wider range of fish species, Heal the Bay President Mark Gold said he hoped the study will prompt authorities to re-evaluate their fish consumption advisories and press forward with plans to cap the offshore chemical deposits.

Today, the state Department of Fish and Game has banned commercial fishermen from catching white croaker off White Point, and the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment advises limits of one meal every two weeks for sculpin, rockfish and kelp bass.

"Obviously, Heal the Bay has been eagerly anticipating the release of this study and we strongly encourage the state to complete the risk assessment in order to protect the public health," Gold said.

"They need to do that as soon as possible."

The study was conducted jointly by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Montrose Settlements Restoration Program, a multi-agency group born out of a legal settlement with Montrose Chemical and dozens of others responsible for the discharge of DDT and other pollutants

off the coast.

Montrose manufactured DDT at its Harbor Gateway plant from 1947 to 1982, a decade after it was banned from releasing the waste into Los Angeles County sewers.

The study includes data collected from 2002 to 2004 from more than 2,500 fish in 30 locations along the Southern California coastline.

It targets 23 of the most common catches, including croaker, bass, surfperch and mackerel.

The last data was collected in 1980s for inclusion in a 1991 study, and the analysis didn't include nearly as many fish or testing locations, said Milena Viljoen, outreach coordinator for the Montrose Settlements Restoration Program.

Viljoen said scientists were able to detect levels of contamination among different fish species and fish of different sizes.

The results showed white croaker accumulated higher amounts of DDT and PCBs in areas where the sediment was more highly contaminated, Viljoen said.

Furthermore, mercury levels varied by species and fish size; bigger and older fish and fish higher up on the food chain generally showed higher concentrations of chemicals than did younger fish.

Viljoen said the goal is to use the study to guide future restoration and clean-up plans and update fishing advisories - guidelines that could change either way based on the new information, said Sam Delson, a spokesman for the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment.

"There is a possibility it could be used to revise our advisories of sport fishing," he said.

The EPA also plans to use the analysis to complete a clean-up plan - known as a record of decision - by early next year, spokesman Dean Higuchi said.

In 2002, the EPA determined the pilot project that used barges to spread clean sediment over three contaminated sites could safely seal in the contaminated particles, but the agency has not moved forward with a larger project.

"We're going to look at all the different ways to reduce the risk to anyone," Higuchi said. "We haven't come to a point where we'll do a record of decision as how we'll approach the cleanup. We're still in flux."

State and federal agencies filed suit against Montrose and 140 industries in 1990, spurring a 10-year legal battle that was finally settled in 2002 for \$140 million.

kristin.agostoni@dailybreeze.com

kristin.agostoni@dailybreeze.com

USER COMMENTS (4 of 4 total)***"Darwin is at work - don't eat the FISH"***

We've demonstrated that eagles have started having chicks and having eggs with thicker shells. That's a fact. If idiots eat the fish, then let Darwin have them.

- Jed

posted: Tuesday, August 7th at 20:45 PM

"incredible"

what are forefathers from the 40's 50' 60's & 70's did to our oceans, and now we have to deal with it, thank you !

posted: Tuesday, August 7th at 18:30 PM

"Informative Article"

Nice article. DDT has now shown to be not nearly as detrimental to the environment as first thought, glad to see that this writer decided to stick to the facts.

- Steve SMith

posted: Tuesday, August 7th at 8:30 AM

"Leave It Alone"

Best to leave the chemical DDT intact alone without disturbing the residue settled at the ocean floor. The problem is way too complex and expensive for a quick fixup. The ocean floor is very unstable due to obvious land slide area by the PV Peninsula. Short term, maybe some excitement but 10-20 years lookout. The ocean floor particles are always in motion like building sand dooms as well. The environmentalist are just employees with no liability of their own. In Florida, tires, man made reef failed big time and now being removed, heavily lead painted Navy ships are used also as reef, sounds good but they are the expert failing at best. The Core of Engineers also not the best but have failed on numerous projects. Back to DDT, if there such a piled up at the ocean floor, suck it up as contaminated material, ofcourse not!

posted: Tuesday, August 7th at 7:40 AM

.submission { display: none; }

Dailybreeze.com reserves the right to remove postings deemed inappropriate. In order to preserve your right to comment, you must follow these guidelines:

1. No comments that are obscene, vulgar, lewd, sexually-oriented, threatening, libelous or illegal
2. No personal attacks or racial slurs
3. Stay on topic

To report an inappropriate comment, [e-mail us at dailybreeze.com](mailto:report@dailybreeze.com).

Title:

Name:

Email:

Comments:

Post

Clear

I have read and agree to abide by the [Comment Policy](#)

Find this article at:

<http://www.dailybreeze.com/news/articles/8960942.html>

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.