From: Mugdan, Walter [mailto:Mugdan.Walter@epa.gov]
Sent: Monday, March 21, 2016 4:28 PM
To: mercurywendroff@mindspring.com
Cc: Maddaloni, Mark
Subject: Reply to your recent correspondence [CMS # 16-000-5830]

Dear Dr. Wendroff:

Regional Administrator Judith Enck has asked me to reply to your correspondence dated March 14, 2016, which forwards a copy of your email dated March 8, 2016 addressed to her and to Dr. Mark Maddaloni, a toxicologist with the EPA Region 2 office of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

You asked a series of questions relating to EPA's recent announcement of a final cleanup plan for the lower eight miles of the Lower Passaic River, issued under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act, commonly known as the Superfund law. Following are replies to your inquiries.

Q1. What adverse human health effects have been reported from the contamination of the Passaic River?

A1. EPA does not gather health effects data for Superfund sites. The goal of the program is to address risks to public health and environment from the release or threatened release of hazardous substances into the environment. To evaluate if the hazardous substances at a Superfund site give rise to risks that require a response, EPA performs a risk assessment following a standard methodology that looks at the kinds of exposures that may be expected at that site.

Q2. What studies have been performed to assess human health effects from contamination of the Passaic River?

A2. EPA's Record of Decision (ROD) for the lower eight miles of the Lower Passaic River, issued March 3, 2016, is based on a detailed record that includes a risk assessment that evaluates the potential human health and ecological risks posed by contaminants in the river. The ROD can be found at: https://semspub.epa.gov/work/02/396055.pdf

Q3. How are people exposed to contaminants in the Passaic River?

A3. As described in the ROD, the primary pathway of human exposure to contaminants in the lower eight miles of the Lower Passaic River is through the consumption of contaminated fish or crabs.

Q4. How many people are exposed to contaminants in the Passaic River?

A4. While the remedy selection process does not involve quantifying the number of people who have been or may be exposed to contaminants in the Lower Passaic River, EPA has documented the fact that, despite health advisories and rules prohibiting consumption of fish or crabs from the Lower Passaic River, people regularly do catch and consume fish and crabs from that waterway. Under the Superfund law and regulations, EPA's obligation at Superfund remedial sites is to provide a level of protectiveness that is focused on the "reasonably maximally exposed individual."

Q5. How can people prevent themselves from exposure to contaminants in the Passaic River?

A5. The best and most obvious way for people to protect themselves from exposure to Lower Passaic River contamination is to avoid eating fish or crabs from that waterway. As noted above, notwithstanding rules against such consumption, people do routinely catch and eat fish and crabs from the Lower Passaic River.

Q6. Are there any reports of homes contaminated as a result of their proximity to the Hudson River?

A6. EPA is not aware of homes that have been contaminated by hazardous substances from the Lower Passaic River as a result of their physical proximity to the river. EPA is aware of homes that have been contaminated by pathogens from Passaic River flooding. EPA is also aware of (and has cleaned up) homes that were contaminated by hazardous substances from the former Diamond Alkali pesticides plant at 80 Lister Avenue in Newark. The Lower Passaic River

constitutes two Operable Units of the Diamond Alkali Superfund site.

Questions A – E, and subsequent questions on ritualistic mercury use in West New York and Union City:

EPA has reviewed the report "Cultural Uses of Mercury in New Jersey" available on the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) website (http://www.state.nj.us/dep/dsr/research/mercury-cultural.pdf). This report summarizes interviews with Santeria practitioners in those two communities, as well as screening results for mercury in indoor air in common spaces (vestibules, hallways) within 34 residential apartment buildings. The report does not provide sufficient information to answer the questions posed in your correspondence and EPA is not aware of any other studies that would. NJDEP has shared that report with the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) for any additional follow-up. Accordingly, questions related to ritualistic mercury use in West New York, Union City and other communities in New Jersey should be directed to NJDOH.

Sincerely yours,

Walter Mugdan, Director
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