Message

From: Chesnutt, John [Chesnutt.John@epa.gov]
Sent: 10/28/2020 7:42:20 PM
To: Manzanilla, Enrique [Manzanilla.Enrique@epa.gov]; Lyons, John [Lyons.John@epa.gov]; Barton, Dana [Barton.Dana@epa.gov]; Rongone, Marie [Rongone.Marie@epa.gov]
Subject: FW: LA Times responses for PV Shelf

FYI. Here's what we provided the LA Times earlier this month.

John

From: Calvino, Maria Soledad <Calvino.Maria@epa.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, October 28, 2020 12:10 PM
To: Chesnutt, John <Chesnutt.John@epa.gov>
Subject: RE: LA Times responses for PV Shelf

Hi John,
Here are all the responses sent to the reporter. Let me know if you need me to send you the zip file reference in the last question. Thanks!

1. **What ended up happening to the "vanishing" or "missing" DDT from the 2004 to 2009 tests? (A number of news outlets reported about this missing DDT back in 2013/2014: https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-mystery-of-the-vanishing-ddt-in-the-ocean-near-los-angeles/ and https://www.scpr.org/news/2013/12/04/40725/scientists-turned-detectives-look-to-crack-the-cas/)**
    - **What was the cause of this sampling error? Some folks said it could've been due to a switch in third-party labs during that study period – is this true?**
    - **News reports at the time said that cleanup efforts had been suspended, pending new tests. Have cleanup efforts resumed?**
        - **If so, what year did the cleanup efforts resume? If not, why have they not resumed?**

Answer: The estimate of the mass of DDT-contaminated sediment on the ocean floor that was included in the 2009 Interim Record of Decision was based on 1994 data. 2009 sediment data showed a significant decrease in mass. To confirm the decreasing mass, EPA conducted the 2013 – 2015 Monitored Natural Recovery Study (First MNR Study) and used nearly identical parameters to conduct a new trend analysis. Although the calculated DDT mass results from the First MNR Study (30 metric tons) were greater than the 2009 results (14 metric tons), they nonetheless confirm a generally decreasing trend when compared to the 1994 estimate of 110 metric tons contained in the 2009 Interim Record of Decision. EPA plans to repeat Monitored Natural Recovery studies approximately every five years.

Part of the differences is likely due to the degradation of DDTs in the interval between the collection events. Also, further investigation into the differences has shown that changes in footprint assumptions, differing numbers of sediment samples used to calculate the mass estimate, and variations in analytical and sediment collection methods could be contributing factors.

Based on the 2009 sediment data, EPA suspended hot spot capping efforts. EPA also collected more data and will reevaluate the capping option in the upcoming Feasibility Study. EPA has continued to implement the two other components of the cleanup, which are: Monitored Natural Recovery (monitoring the sediment, water, and fish tissue for changes in DDTs as well as PCBs concentrations)

and Institutional Controls (public outreach and education to increase awareness and understanding of the existing fish consumption advisories, and the enforcement of California Department of Fish and Wildlife commercial and recreational restrictions on white croaker fishing).

2. **Have there been any updates since the second five-year review, which you published in September 2019? Has a final remedy been selected?**

   Answer: The Second Five Year Review is the last document EPA published, and the final remedy has not yet been selected. EPA is in the process of awarding the contract for a new Feasibility Study, which will support the selection of a final cleanup strategy for the site. This new study will update our understanding of the relationship between sediment and fish contamination, update the human health and ecological risk assessments, update previously considered cleanup alternatives, and reevaluate cleanup alternatives using data collected since the 2009 Interim Record of Decision. EPA anticipates awarding the contract by the end of 2020 and initiating discussions on the new Feasibility Study with the Palos Verdes Shelf Technical Information Exchange Group, a group of technical experts from federal, state, and local regulatory agencies, local non-governmental organizations, and local educational institutions, by early 2021.

3. **What are your team's plans for long-term monitoring and management of the site?**

   Answer: EPA will continue the current monitoring, outreach, and enforcement activities pursuant to the Interim Record of Decision, complete the Final Record of Decision based on the new Feasibility Study, and then adjust to any changes identified in the Final Record of Decision for Palos Verdes Shelf.

4. **When do you expect to publish the next public update on the site progress?**

   Answer: Our next significant update will likely be associated with the completion of the upcoming Feasibility Study, which is anticipated in 2024. Meanwhile, we continue to work with our community partners on public outreach and education, to include posting updates on the Fish Contamination Education Collaborative website (www.pvsfish.org).

   As I mentioned over the phone, here's the press release that was issued back in August about the latest settlement with Montrose: EPA Reaches $56.6 million Settlement for Groundwater Cleanup at Los Angeles Area Superfund Sites

5. **Would the EPA/the Montrose team like to respond to the frustrations that some stakeholders have expressed on how long the process has been taking to reach a final cleanup remedy?**

   Answer:

   The objective of an EPA Superfund remedy is to ensure the protection of human health and the environment. EPA continues to implement the Monitored Natural Recovery and Institutional Controls components of the 2009 Interim Record of Decision. Institutional controls include public outreach and education to increase awareness and understanding of the existing fish consumption advisories, and the enforcement of commercial and recreational restrictions on white croaker fishing. The results from the First Monitored Natural Recovery Study indicate that the DDTs and PCBs concentrations in the sediment are decreasing through natural recovery as expected and that the Institutional Controls are effective in minimizing human exposures to contaminated fish. The significant changes in fish tissue, fish movement, sediment, and water column data collected by EPA since the 2009 Interim Remedy, however, challenge whether our previous understanding of how sediment contaminants transfer to fish and ultimately to humans and the environment is still valid. Therefore, we are updating our evaluation of the mechanisms of how the DDTs and PCBs in the sediment impact human health and the environment in this complex system and will then issue a Feasibility Study to evaluate alternatives for a Final Remedy.

6. **Here is the UC Santa Barbara study on the barrels and deep ocean dumping:** https://pubs.acs.org/doi/pdf/10.1021/acs.est.8b05859?rand=0vxkxul6. **Would the EPA like to comment on this study? Are these barrels a concern? What should be done with this new information that confirms something that could not be proven with first-hand evidence back in the 1980s/1990s?**

And does the team know what happened to Montrose as a company? Does it still exist, has it been absorbed into a bigger company, etc? How would you describe Montrose as an entity today? (I understand there is still some ongoing litigation with Montrose in the courts)
Answer:

On background:
- EPA is in ongoing litigation with Montrose, so we are going to decline to comment at this time.
- In 2000, the district court ruled that Montrose Chemical Corporation of California is a liable party, and Montrose has entered into several consent decrees since then to perform work and/or pay response costs, including, most recently, the August settlement that I sent you last week. There is a fair amount of discussion of Montrose's corporate history in the introduction to the 1998 Final Remedial Investigation Report for the Montrose Superfund Site: https://semspub.epa.gov/work/09/88043311.pdf. You could always look through our documents online to see if you find any additional information that is already public.

7. **One more question from our map illustrator: Could the Montrose Superfund team send us the shapefiles for the Superfund site on the Palos Verdes Shelf? I've seen this map in a number of reports, with the superfund site/'area of contaminated sediment" outlined in a jagged shape:**
https://19january2017snapshot.epa.gov/www3/region9/superfund/pvshelf/images/yellowmapbig.gif
Answer: Our project manager for the PVS site asked LA County Sanitation District to re-create the shapefiles for the image you had requested. Please see zip file attached.

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