UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION IX
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

OFFICE OF THE
REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-0504

Dear Senator Feinstein:

Thank you for your letter dated March 8, 2021 concerning the deep-water ocean disposal sites in the offshore waters of Southern California, and progress at the Palos Verdes Shelf (Shelf) portion of the Montrose Chemical Corp. Superfund Site. I share your concern about the potential impacts to human health and the environment presented by legacy DDT-related issues. Since October 2020, when former EPA Regional Administrator John Busterud spoke with you about this challenge, the Environmental Protection Agency, Region 9 (EPA) has continued to prioritize the protection of the public from the most imminent threats from DDT contamination on the Shelf, and is planning a multi-agency meeting to discuss the deep-water ocean disposal sites.

The work of the EPA Superfund Program to clean up the undersea Shelf portion of the Montrose Chemical Corp. Site, and to protect the community from seafood potentially contaminated by DDT, is proceeding apace on multiple fronts and continues to be a priority. EPA is in the final stages of awarding a contract to update the human health and ecological risk assessments for the Shelf, which became contaminated through chemical runoff into the Pacific via sewers, not through ocean dumping of DDT drums. Drawing upon the assessments, EPA will then evaluate the available cleanup technologies in a Feasibility Study of cleanup alternatives for the Shelf. This work, which will be made available for public review, will support the selection of a final remedy for cleaning up the Shelf.

Throughout this time, EPA's extensive public education/outreach project to protect public health will continue moving forward in partnership with community-based organizations, local, state, and federal agencies. This effort includes multilingual public signage and fish market inspection programs, along with proactive educational work, to address public health risks presented by DDT contamination of seafood.

Regarding the historic deep-ocean disposal sites, this situation constitutes a complex and large-scale challenge. In addition to the disposal site off Santa Catalina Island recently explored by the University of California, Santa Barbara, there are 13 more documented disposal sites off the coast, and chemicals beyond DDT are involved. Because the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Department of the Interior, as federal natural resource trustees, have important roles to play in understanding the effects on the marine environment from this

disposal, EPA is working with these partners and state agencies to convene a meeting later in the spring. In the coming months, as the results of the NOAA-sponsored Scripps' research project are realized and multi-agency discussions progress, EPA would welcome opportunities to update you.

If you have any questions on this matter, or would like additional information, please contact me at 415-972-3133 or Jordan.Deborah@epa.gov, or refer your staff to our Congressional Liaison, Sonam Gill, at (415) 972-3380 or Gill.Sonam@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

DEBORAH JORDAN

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Deborah Jordan
Acting Regional Administrator

cc: Benjamin Friedman, Acting Administrator, NOAA
Paul Souza, Regional Director, Pacific Southwest Region, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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