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

July 2, 2021

County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors
Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Madam Chair and Members of the Board:

Thank you for your letter of May 7, 2021, to Administrator Regan concerning the assessment of DDT damage off the coast of Catalina Island as it relates to the Montrose Chemical Corporation Superfund Site, and the request to expedite its cleanup. I share your concern about the potential impacts that the legacy of DDT presents to human health and the environment. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) continues to prioritize protecting the public from the most imminent threats from DDT contamination, and we would be happy to provide an update on the status and success of these efforts to the Board at a time of your convenience.

To date, EPA's Pacific Southwest Region has helped convene four meetings with senior leaders from state and federal agencies to discuss this issue, the most recent being last week. Alongside EPA, participating agencies are the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the U.S. Department of the Interior, CalEPA, the California Natural Resources Agency, the California State Water Resources Control Board, the California Department of Toxic Substances Control, and the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board. Focusing on Disposal Site #2 northeast of Santa Catalina Island, this group is exploring a process to determine the nature and extent of the deep-water contamination as well as the degree of impact on marine resources and human health.

In support of this multi-agency effort, the EPA's Pacific Southwest Region is conducting an initial review of the historical record of Montrose Chemical's disposal of acid waste containing DDT. This review makes use of our extensive investigation of the operational history at the Montrose Torrance DDT plant, which is a part of the land-based Montrose Chemical Superfund National Priorities List Site. This review suggests that DDT-containing waste was removed in bulk from the plant via tanker trucks, transferred to holding tanks in barges at the docks, and deposited in the Pacific Ocean as bulk product, rather than in drums. As a result, the EPA will soon start to collect and evaluate the available regulatory history of Disposal Site #2 to determine the sources of waste disposed at the site. This will help inform the scope of a follow-up assessment of Disposal Site #2, and will support future conversations among the multi-agency senior leaders' group.

As noted in California State Assemblymember Patrick O'Donnell's Assembly Joint Resolution 2, California's coastal and marine waters are among the state's most precious resources, and their conservation is essential to the preservation of both marine wildlife and California's thriving ocean economy. The EPA understands the importance of preserving these natural resources and protecting human health and takes seriously our commitment to science and transparency. We welcome opportunities to update the Board as the multi-agency effort progresses.

If you have any questions on this matter, or would like additional information, please contact me at 415-972-3133 or via email at jordan.deborah@epa.gov. Please feel free to refer your staff to our Congressional Liaison, Julia Giarmoleo, at 213-326-2033 or via email at giarmoleo.julia@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

DEBORAH JORDAN

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Deborah Jordan
Acting Regional Administrator

cc: Admiral Nancy Hann, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Janet Whitlock, U.S. Department of the Interior
Jared Blumenfeld, California Environmental Protection Agency
Jonathan Bishop, California State Water Resources Control Board
Renee Purdy, Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board
Grant Cope, California Department of Toxic Substances Control
Mark Gold, California Natural Resources Agency