May 19, 2010

Dear:

We would like to take this opportunity to provide you with an update on the San Jacinto River Waste Pits that lie in your community, and we also request for your assistance in helping spread public awareness about the dangers of eating contaminated fish and crab from these waterways.

These waste pits are located along the western bank of the San Jacinto River just north of I-10, lying partially submerged in waters from the 1960s when waste filled with a hazardous substance known as dioxin, was dumped there by a paper mill company (see attached map).

The waste pits are part of a federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) program known as Superfund to clean the site. As part of this, the responsible companies have fenced off the eastern and western bank of the San Jacinto River with signs telling the public not to eat fish or crab. The companies have also agreed to begin a short-term remedy of laying a physical protective barrier over the pits to stop the on-going release of dioxin into the waterways.

In conjunction with this, we are working with EPA and other stakeholders to build public awareness about avoiding eating polluted fish. Samples collected from sediment, water, fish and crab tissues both upstream and downstream from the site show elevated levels of dioxins above health-based benchmarks. Dioxin can lodge into the fatty tissues of animals and when consumed by humans, it can have adverse health impacts. Dioxin is known to cause cancer, skin conditions, delay physical and neurological development and have long-terms effects on the immune and reproductive systems.

You can help in the following ways. Please identify what resources you may be able to offer (e.g. volunteers, programs within your organization that can be used to educate the public, organizing school contests etc.). Please also provide us with a contact person within your organization and their phone number and email address.

We have partnered with Galveston Bay Foundation and you can contact them with the above-requested information by calling or emailing at:

We look forward to collaborating with you on this important public health issue.

Sincerely,

Commissioner Sylvia R. Garcia	Vince Ryan
Harris County Commissioner Precinct 2	Harris County Attorney

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