Office of Response and Restoration • Office of Habitat Conservation • General Counsel for Natural Resources

Suisun Bay National Reserve Fleet Assessment Project

Update – AUGUST, 2008

NOAA's Office of Response and Restoration began investigating environmental contaminants in and around the National Reserve Fleet in Suisun Bay, California in January 2008. Over the spring and early summer, NOAA worked with local stakeholders to develop a field sampling and analysis plan that would address key questions about the potential environmental impacts of the fleet. In August, NOAA completed field work for the study. Sediment and tissue samples are currently being analyzed, and a data report is planned for early 2009. This fact sheet is part of continuing series of monthly updates.

NOAA's Damage Assessment, Remediation, and Restoration Program (DARRP) collaborates with other agencies, industry, and citizens to protect and restore coastal and marine resources threatened or injured by oil spills, releases of hazardous substances, and vessel groundings.

Recent Progress

NOAA team members completed the field sampling work in August when they collected bagged mussels from the site. The mussels (*Mytilus* complex) were deployed in June and left in place for approximately eight weeks. Three replicates were placed at each of nine sampling stations in the Reserve Fleet and other locations in Suisun Bay. The soft tissues of the mussels will be analyzed for contaminants. The results will provide information on the uptake of contaminants by the mussels.

Field notes and pictures of the field sampling efforts in July and August are being compiled by the NOAA team and entered into a database for easy retrieval.

All the samples collected and shipped to the analytical laboratories have been received and checked in, and the analytical work is underway. We expect all the data to be back by the end of October.

Mussel bags (far left) being prepared for deployment in June. These animals were retrieved in August and will be sent to a laboratory for contaminant analysis.

Bags of mussels like these were deployed at nine sampling stations in the Reserve Fleet and other locations throughout Suisun Bay.

Next Steps

As analytical data comes back from the laboratories it will undergo data validation and be entered into the project contaminant database.

Preliminary screening for paint chips and/or debris in surface sediment samples was completed in the field during the sample collection effort. Additional screening is planned using higher magnification equipment than was available in the field, and this work will be completed at NOAA's regional laboratory in Seattle, Washington.

Subsurface sediment sample being "extruded" or pushed out of the tube into a stainless steel pot, where it will be thoroughly mixed before being transferred to sampling jars.

Background stories by San Francisco bay area news agencies now available online

Local television station KQED ran a story on the Suisun Bay Reserve Fleet on August 12, 2008. The story does not mention the recent NOAA field sampling effort, but it does provide a good summary of the issues. http://www.kqed.org/quest/television/ghost-fleet

A more interview recent interview with ABC7 news (http://abclocal.go.com/kgo/media?id=6353203) featured OR&R scientists, Rob Ricker and Ben Shorr, explaining the objective of overall sampling and the use of the mussels to monitor contamination.

For More Information

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To learn more about this project visit our Web site:
http://www.darrp.noaa.gov/

Suisun Bay Timeline

- **J** — **2008**
- **F** — January 2008 thru March: Information gathering
- **M**
- **A** — March thru April: develop draft sampling plan
- **M** — May to June: Revise and finalize sampling plan
- **J**
- **J** — July: Field work
- **A** — July to September: Chemical analysis of samples
- **S**
- **O** — October: Data analysis and preliminary interpretations
- **N** — November: Solicit preliminary comments from technical representatives of stakeholders
- **D** — December to January 2009: Prepare draft report and recommendations
- **J** — **2009**
- **F** — February 2009: Finalize report