

DELTA SIERRAN

LOUISIANA CHAPTER OF THE SIERRA CLUB JULY/AUGUST 2003

Please see our website for more information on Chapter and Group activities, outings and events at <http://www.louisiana.sierrclub.org>

CHEMICAL WEAPONS A THREAT TO CITIZENS HERE IN U.S.

By Maurice Coman
Delta Chapter Chair

Here in Louisiana the threat from chemical poisoning is all around us. Chemicals in are our air, chemicals are in our water , chemicals are in our food and with petro-chemical plants lining the Mississippi River and our coast, the threat is going to be with us for some time.

However, the one threat we do not have here is the very real possibility of being poisoned or killed by our own government's incineration of weapons of mass destruction. We do not have to live with the worry that artillery shells and rockets containing nerve gas being burned just a few short miles from our homes will destroy our lives and the lives of our loved ones. Yet the good citizens of Anniston, Alabama are staring at that very real probability (possibly by the time you are reading this).

Anniston, Alabama (about 40 miles east of Birmingham) is one of the most polluted towns in this country, if not the most polluted. Monsanto Corporation (now Solutia) developed polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) there in the late 1920's or early 1930's. At that time, the dangers were not known and dumping into waterways and on land occurred without any second thought. There are literally high hills of soil with grass growing on them that are totally polluted with high levels of PCB's.

Now the next insult comes along: The US Army has built an incinerator just to the west at the Anniston Army

Depot to burn their stockpile of chemical weapons that date back at least as far as WWII. The destruction of the stockpile, a good thing on anyone's list, is mandated by the latest chemical weapons treaty. The problem is how the Army wants to destroy these weapons of mass destruction.

There is a much safer alternative method of disposal, chemical neutralization, being used in four other facilities in Colorado, Indiana, Maryland and Kentucky. Altogether there are eight stockpiles of chemical weapons in this country. Besides Alabama, Arkansas is also about to be threatened with the test fire its incinerator and the remaining two sites are also leaning toward incineration. *(READ MORE ABOUT IT: PCBs, INCINERATION & CHEMICAL INCINERATION on Page 7)*

The Chemical Weapons Working Group, an independent non-profit organization dedicated to the safe elimination of the chemical arsenal, has been working with the community and Alabama Chapter of the Sierra Club to try to get a court injunction to stop the immediate start of burning at Anniston.

The question is, why isn't the Army



Sierra Club and community activists protest outside the Anniston Army Depot. (Photo: Carolyn Wells)

orking with the community toward any protection from potential accidents? The Army is pushing to begin burning as soon as mid-July. Plans call for a community-wide program of preventive measures in case the unthinkable release of chemical agents does occur.

One of the most critical is installing equipment to positive-pressure schools (good air seeping out prevents bad air seeping in) and other places of congregation (churches, halls, etc.). The problem is the schools and other "shelters" are not pressurized yet and cannot be finished before October. In addition,

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Explore, Enjoy and Protect the Environment.

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The Delta Sierran is the bi-monthly newsletter for the Delta Chapter of the Sierra Club. This newsletter is published to inform state-wide members and interested non-members of the activities of the Chapter and pending local, state, and national environmental issues.

Members of the Sierra Club subscribe to Delta Sierran through annual dues.

POSTMASTER: Address changes may be sent to: Sierra Club Member Services, PO Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80328-2968 All correspondence to the Chapter may be sent to: Delta Chapter Sierra Club, PO Box 19469, New Orleans, LA 70179-0469

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DELTA SIERRAN

CHEMICAL WEAPONS...

(From Page 1)

breathing hoods (think the top half of chemical suits you see at clean up sites on the TV news) are not in the community yet (many residents are too frightened of having to use them that they refuse to even go pick them up) and there is no plan to deal with special needs residents (the disabled, the elderly those without their own transportation). Basically, there is no comprehensive plan in place in the event of an accident.

The infamous Shelter-In-Place scenario (duct tape and plastic to seal an inside room in a resident's home) is the only solution now offered. It is totally irresponsible of the government to even think of firing up at this time.

So why burn in Anniston? Simply because the incinerator is built. Yet transforming it to neutralization is possible using the basic infrastructure in place for the incinerator. In this process the waste is mixed with a caustic solution and typically requires secondary treatment. Advantages are: containment of by-products; more complete analysis of by-products; low temperatures, which are safer for workers; prevention of uncontrolled release of hazardous wastes, even when problems occur; high destruction efficiency; and no dioxin formation

Still, why should we be concerned here in Louisiana? Putting aside that the people who will be most affected are lower income and people of color, there is the threat of that Arkansas incinerator just to our north. Where do our prevailing winds come during the winter?

In order to lend support to our fellow Sierrans and community activists in Alabama fighting the chemical incineration, Harold Schoeffler, Barbara Coman, Maura Wood and Maurice Coman from the Delta Chapter attended the two-day June meeting of the Gulf Coast Regional Conservation Committee of the Sierra Club (GCRCC) held in Anniston. The GCRCC is the regional level of Sierra Club conservation program above the Chapter. The Gulf Coast RCC covers the states of AL, AR,

FL, GA, LA, MS, TN & TX.

At this meeting, we were lucky enough to have Ross Vincent, Sierra Club Chemical Weapons Task Force Chair and Craig Williams, Director of CWWG as experts to share the alternatives to incineration with the public through talk radio shows, a Birmingham local morning TV news show, a meeting with the rotary club and then meeting with county commissioners. The forum held on Saturday attracted at least 70 people, many of them community members.

Our first panel discussion of the meeting consisted of citizens who have been permanently injured by years of exposure to PCB's and nerve gas from a leak in the early 90's. People are both scared and angry over the loss of family members and friends to cancers way above what should be the average for a community of its size. A mother, her grown daughter and her infant grand daughter were there to speak to these injustices from PCB exposure (high concentrations are in the soil everywhere in West Anniston).

Another woman who was a school teacher was exposed to nerve gas in her own front yard. Now she has health problems too numerous to count. Her sister has to go with her everywhere in case she has one kind of attack or another come over her. We could not applaud her talk or take photos as the noise or flashes could cause a seizure.

We then had a toxic tour of the Anniston area and then met the media at a gate to the Army depot. Here at least 50 people participated in a protest event that attracted all the major networks and newspapers and radio. It was unbelievably energizing!

The Delta Chapter will be making a \$1000 contribution to the CWWG to help offset the expense of the fight to stop the weapons incineration. If you would like to make a contribution to the CWWG, please send it care of:

KY Environmental Foundation
P.O. Box 467
Berea, Ky 40403

Recent media attention, including the Times-Picayune's very good series on coastal erosion, wetlands loss, and their remediation (with its impacts on local oyster fishermen) and two best-selling books, *Bayou Farewell* by Mike Tidwell and *Holding Back The Sea* by Christopher Hallowell, on Louisiana's problems with coastal erosion and wetlands loss, has finally brought much-needed national attention to this impending disaster.

This crisis threatens wildlife habitat, our protection from a major hurricane or tropical storm (and its storm surges), and the state's coastal economy, including shrimping, crabbing, and fishing, and the futures of those who make their living from these activities. These men and women, of Cajun, Native American, and African ancestry, face a future without these livelihoods, if we don't insist that coastal erosion and wetlands loss problems be taken seriously.

Governor Mike Foster finally got concerned about these problems, and acted on them, after he read both Tidwell's and Hallowell's books. He, according to these authors, sent copies of their books to all the members of the Louisiana Legislature's so that they could read and understand how serious this crisis was. I suppose we should say, "Better late than never," about Gov. Foster's new-found concern over coastal erosion and wetlands loss. After eight years to put conservation legislation before this legislature, perhaps he wants to leave an

environmental legacy, and not just stories about his stint as a part-time law student at Southern University in Baton Rouge, and putting "helmet-optional" legislation on the books, for those adults who find motorcycle helmets too confining.

"It's About Time" Delta Sierran Editorial Wendy King Delta Sierran Editor

What, then, will Gov. Mike Foster's environmental legacy be?

Eight years ago, he was openly hostile to environmental groups, especially to the Tulane Environmental Law Clinic, with its law students who defeated Shintech's bid to build a giant PVC plant in St. James Parish. Gov. Foster and his business allies pressured the Louisiana Supreme Court to tighten the Rule XX regulations governing law students' practice in Louisiana's state courts, and nationwide. (These restrictions don't apply to federal cases Tulane Law Clinic students work on.) This made it much harder for local non-profit groups like the League of Women Voters in New Orleans, LEAN (Louisiana Environmental Action Network), the Alliance For Affordable Energy, and the Sierra Club's Delta Chapter to be represented by these

law students and their supervising attorney-professors.

Gov. Foster, an avid hunter, and his fellow "hunters," have left us with White Lake, a rich man's preserve, with \$25,000 "hunting fees," a too-cozy relationship with BP-Amoco and other oil companies on the White Lake Preserve's Board, a "non-navigable" lake, and lots of unanswered environmental questions.

As this governor's term ends, our job is seeing what we need from our next governor. We need a governor who takes coastal erosion, wetlands loss, and other environmental issues seriously, and not as a series of political jokes.

Eight years ago, Gov. Foster mocked Louisiana's environmentalists and their supporters as wimps. Now he's so concerned about the environment that he's read 2 books on coastal erosion and wetlands loss, and is speaking to his legislative leaders about it.

His "conversion" experience has a hitch. After he leaves office, he leaves this "legacy" (and its benefits and political consequences) to the next governor, who will have to face questions about the petrochemical industry's role in coastal erosion, air and land pollution, and wetlands loss, about dying coastal cultures, and will have to face industry allies in the legislature, who often see environmental reforms as threats to their interests.

Here's to the next governor of the great state of Louisiana!!!

BUFFALO COVE PUBLIC WORKSHOP A SUCCESS! By Pat Forbes

As you know from the last issue of the *Delta Sierran*, the Delta Chapter is in the process of developing a position on the proposed Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) project at Buffalo Cove Water Management Unit (WMU) in the Atchafalaya Basin. In order to have as much information as possible before taking a position, the Delta Chapter requested/sponsored two events during the last quarter. The first was a tour of the WMU with representatives of all the involved parties on May 28. The second was a June 25 public workshop that in-

cluded representatives of the involved parties, as well a great many members of the general public.

The primary purpose of the project is to improve water quality in the inner portions of the WMU by improving the north-south flow of water through the WMU. While practically everyone agrees with the need to improve the water quality in the WMU, there are concerns about how best to go about doing that, and whether a full Environmental Impact Statement should be conducted prior to starting construction of the project, currently slated for this fall and is expected to take approximately 18 months.

Maura Wood, C.C. Lockwood, Harold Schoeffler, and Pat Forbes represented

the Sierra Club on the May 28 site visit. Nearly 10 small boats of interested people toured aspects of the project to see where the design elements would actually be constructed, to see what they look like now, and to discuss the proposed construction elements. The water was very high, so it was easy to see what the flows were doing. The original schedule for the day was to visit 7 of the 10 proposed elements, but we ended up visiting the locations of only three of the design elements in the initial plan; Poncho Chute, Jackass Bay Inlet and Element 15.

There were lively discussions at each

See Buffalo Cove... on Page 7

Yes! We all remember Mohammed Said al-Sahaf. He was the Iraqi Minister of Information who appeared daily on international television as U.S. soldiers were rapidly overrunning Iraq. The minister never let hard facts interfere with the briefings that he gave to waiting journalists. "The Americans are nowhere near Baghdad," he would vehemently announce, even as U.S. tanks were moving down the street a few blocks away. The Iraqi army was forcing the American invaders out, he would say, "God will roast their stomachs in hell at the hands of the Iraqis!"

Said al-Sahaf's pronouncements were so strident and so out of touch with reality that he became known to viewers in the West as "Comical Ali" and "Baghdad Bob." He looked great on television: a powerful voice; dangerous, steely eyes through heavy-rimmed glasses; a jaunty beret topping his green uniform. His broad shoulders and big chest made him look as menacing as a professional wrestler.

One of his most memorable remarks was "Lying is forbidden in Iraq. President Saddam Hussein will tolerate nothing but truthfulness." After predicting that "Our overall assessment is that they [the Americans] will all die," one day the man whom everyone in the West looked forward to seeing on the news, disappeared. Coincidentally, it was the day the American army took over most of Baghdad. The minister, who had become something of a cult figure to the war-news junkies who waited daily for his superlative pronouncements, was nowhere to be found.

Immediately a web site dedicated to him appeared: www.welovetheiraqiinformationminister.com. The webmaster, obviously a great fan, started daily reports of the minister's suspected whereabouts. It was inevitable that tee shirts, barbecue aprons, and coffee mugs were listed for sale. Despite his high profile during the invasion of Iraq and his picture on tee

shirts and mugs, the minister's visage does not appear on any of the deck of playing cards picturing the 55 most wanted men in the defeated Iraqi regime. Was there a reason for the omission?

Not long after the collapse of the Iraqi government, two high-profile people in the Bush administration announced their resignations. The first

EXCLUSIVE! IRAQI INFORMATION MINISTER TO JOIN BUSH ADMINISTRATION! EARL'S PEARLS

was Ari Fleischer, the president's press secretary and principal spokesman. The second was the administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, Christine Todd Whitman. The *Delta Sierran* has learned, however, that the Iraqi minister's disappearance and the apparent resignations of Fleischer and Whitman were not merely coincidental.

The president plans to announce that *both* of these officials will be replaced by Mohammed Said al-Sahaf, who, having recently resurfaced sans beret, is being given amnesty and an apology for being left out of the deck of cards. He will assume the position as chief spokesman of the Bush administration, especially on environmental matters.

Reports are that Minister Mo, as he will be called, has actually been holed up in the same undisclosed, clandestine location to which Vice President Cheney retreats when the homeland security alert level or the political heat get too high. Minister Mo was being briefed and schooled on Bush-Chaney environmental policy by officials from Halliburton, and he has already prepared a set of standard responses to questions about the environment. For example,

Minister Mo had never heard of a nutria, so it was easy for him to respond to the question of what can the federal government do to help control Louisiana's nutrias, which are a factor in the disappearance of the coastal marshes.

"Nutria?! There are no nutria in Louisiana, God willing. They have all committed suicide – if there ever were any." This is an excellent response to the question because the person asking it will be too dumbfounded to follow up. Here are some more pronouncements that we can expect from the Bush administration's new spokesman.

"Those who are opposed to drilling for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge are stupid! They are just stupid. The drilling will have no effect whatsoever on the environment – or the wildlife, Allah be praised – if there is any wildlife on the refuge, which there isn't. The animals have all left."

"There is no danger from asbestos, polyvinyl chloride, or DDT. Those were all lies made up by the environmentalists, who are infidels. The president has declared that asbestos and PVC and DDT are good for us. We will not be misled by sniveling dogs. They will all roast in hell, God willing."

"We are not afraid of the environmentalists. Allah has condemned them." Minister Mo will resume wearing his dark beret. It gives him an air of cocky superiority. The Iraqi uniform will be replaced, however. As of this writing it is not clear what clothing he will don for public appearances. Several suggestions have been made, and the one that seems to be the most catchy among Bush administration image-doctors is the wide belt and buckle of Smoky the Bear, holding up Smoky's blue trousers. Now that Smoky has been retired, his image is available for use elsewhere. Minister Mo, like Smoky, will appear shirtless, displaying a hirsute chest.

Remember, you read it here in the *Delta Sierran* first.

-- Earl Higgins

2003 LA LEGISLATIVE SESSION ROUNDUP

By Darrell Hunt, Delta Chapter Contract Lobbyist

A glance at the final action of the hundreds of bills the Sierra Club tracked during the 2003 Legislative Session indicates that most, ultimately, went nowhere, which is usually the case during an election year. Nevertheless, important work was done in a number of areas, which are broken down as follows.

Coastal Restoration. This was perhaps the major initiative of the Foster Administration in its last year in office. Administration officials went all out in their lobby on these bills. SB 213 (Dardenne) is a constitutional amendment to create a Coastal Restoration Fund. SB 214 (Dupre), another constitutional amendment, would make changes in the Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Fund to promote further coastal restoration efforts.

Homeland Security, Anti-Terrorism. Developments in this public policy area are troubling because they increasingly provide bad actor companies the opportunity to conceal critical information from the public. HB 1096 (Thompson), dealing with homeland security and pipeline records, exempts certain pipeline-related information from the Public Information Act. HB 694 (Ansardi) on anti-terrorism fails as did past legislation to define *operation plans*.

DEQ, DNR, Environmental Regulations. Many of these bills came out of the Department of Environmental Quality task force and were supported by industry and the environmental community. Nevertheless, industry conducted a late session sneak attack on HB 545 (Daniel) with an amendment not agreed upon by the task force that relaxes certain air permit requirements. This bill was probably the major loss of the session.

HB 886 (Damico) would allow DEQ to adopt fees required by Federal Clean Air Act in severe or extreme ozone non-attainment areas. SB 402 (Fontenot) requires DEQ to develop new criteria for compliance inspections relative to

environmental quality. SB 577 (Fontenot) authorizes the Secretary of DEQ to issue citations for minor environmental violations.

Land Acquisition, Donations, Bike Paths, Atchafalaya Basin. There were some notable developments in this area, not the least of which is the bill we promoted to create a land acquisition program structure, HB 1432 (Daniel), the Louisiana Purchase Commemorative Act program. Now to find funding! HB 458 (Welch) would promote bike paths along levees in East Baton Rouge Parish. HB 852 (Quezaire) adds Ascension Parish to the Atchafalaya Trace Program and adds a member to the Commission. SB 1117 (Gautreaux) provides for duties of the Department of Natural Resources Secretary in the Atchafalaya Basin Program.

Finally, HB 280 (DeWitt) would create procedures requiring legislative approval for donation of immovable property response, clearly a response to the White Lake imbroglio.

Groundwater, Surface Water bills. Another important public policy area with important changes this session. SB 99 (Cain) is a fairly comprehensive bill dealing with groundwater regulation that, among other things, creates a Groundwater Czar within DNR.

Another bill, HB 1932 (Daniel), dealing with groundwater contamination lawsuits, sets up procedures to ensure that judgments resulting from lawsuits brought by landowners with contaminated property will actually be used to remediate groundwater. This bill, also one of the most contentious of the session, pitted Big Oil and the Governor's Office against Landowners, the Louisiana Trial Lawyers Association, Police Juries,

School Boards, and the Environmental Community.

Big Oil claimed the major reason for bringing the bill was to prevent landowners from absconding with judgment money and not addressing contaminated groundwater. In truth, the goal was to make it such that there would be no such lawsuits. The upshot of the final bill is that landowners still have plenty of grounds for bringing such lawsuits, and resulting judgments must be used to address surface and groundwater contamination. We can count this result as a major victory.

Renewable Energy, Innovative Technologies. Although these bills all but flew under radar during the session, they will result in some positive changes, but a couple will require vigilance. HB 78 (Daniel), dealing with renewable energy, is a positive move towards allowing net energy sellbacks to utility companies. HB 1170 (Damico) would allow innovative technologies for preventing environmental waste migration. HB 1334 (Beard), would create an effluent reduction credit banking system. HB 2016, also by Beard, creates a Reclaimed Water Program.

Other Notables. HB 1321 (Carter) creates an environmental health surveillance system that will complement a national Health-Track Program created a couple of years ago. Among other things, these programs will help quickly identify health problems related to environmental contamination. Also, SB 45 (McPherson) authorizes the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission to establish a program for removal of abandoned crab traps from Louisiana waters.

Act Now and Save the Environment!

Make a commitment to the next generation by remembering the Sierra Club in your will. Your support will help others preserve the intricate balance of nature.

For more information and confidential assistance, please complete the form and send to:
John Calaway, Director, Gift Planning
85 Second Street, 2nd Floor, San Francisco,
CA 94105 (415) 977-5639 •
e-mail: planned.giving@sierraclub.org

NAME _____

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THE EVENTS PAGE

DELTA CHAPTER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

OCTOBER 18-19, 2003

The New Orleans Group hosts the next Delta Chapter meeting
Contact Chapter Chair
Maurice Coman for more information

ACADIAN GROUP General Meeting & Lecture Series:

Acadian Group of the Sierra Club has a general meeting and hosts a guest lecture on the 3rd Wednesday of every month at the Acadiana Symphony Building at 6:30pm. Where: Acadiana Symphony Building 412 Travis St., Lafayette, LA.

The Acadian Group of the Sierra Club is always looking for speakers. Past speakers have talked about wildlife, native plants, invasive species, reforestation, environmental education, the news media, and environ-mental concerns of local or global nature.

If you would like to volunteer or suggest a speaker for the general meeting please contact Paul Fontenot at 337-235-0011.

BATON ROUGE GROUP Meetings:

<http://louisiana.sierraclub.org/batonrouge/>

3rd Quarter General Membership Meeting - September 18th - 7 to 9:00 p.m.: Please see our website above for program information.

Executive Committee Meetings: The first Sunday of each month unless it's a holiday weekend then it be the second Sunday, at the Goodwood Library at 7 p.m. The meetings are open to all members.

Transportation Committee Meeting: The Transportation Committee meets on the first Wednesday each month at 6:45 p.m. at Bluebonnet Library, 9200 Bluebonnet. For more information, call David Lindenfeld at 766-1983.

Conservation Committee Meeting every month on the third Tuesday at 7 pm at the "Community Room" of the Law Office of Moore, Walters, Thompson, etc. at 6513 Perkins Road across from the Pennington Center.

HONEY ISLAND GROUP Meetings:

<http://louisiana.sierraclub.org/honeyisland/>

September 18th Executive Committee Meeting Call Bill Sussky at 893-5150 or wsussky@minilogic.com for more info.

October 16th General Membership Meeting - 7:00 p.m.
At the Mandeville Community Center, 3090 West Causeway Approach. Please see our website above for program information.

KISATCHIE GROUP:

The Kisatchie Group is the home of Sierra Club members throughout much of north-western Louisiana, centered on Shreveport. Get in Touch! Contact and Chair - Jeffrey Wellborn, 318-222-1801, jwellbrn@seaber.com
Kisatchie Group, PO Box 2098, Shreveport, LA 71166-2098.

NEW ORLEANS GROUP Meetings:

<http://louisiana.sierraclub.org/neworleans/>

September 8th - The New Orleans Executive Committee will meet at 7 p.m.*

September 14th General Membership Meeting - 7:00 p.m. - Dominican Conference Center at 540 Broadway St. The SE Louisiana Refuge System: Elizabeth Souheaver, Project leader for the SE La Refuge system will present an overview of refuges surrounding our area. There are seven refuges in SE La. Learn more about the recreational opportunities and environmental needs. Become a "Friend of the Louisiana Wildlife Refuges". This should be an interesting educational program.

October 7th - The New Orleans Executive Committee will meet at 7 p.m.*

October 12th General Membership Meeting - 7:00 p.m. - Dominican Conference Center at 540 Broadway St. Tentative Program: The Pearl River

N.O. Group Members -Sign Up For Group Notices!

Any members who want to receive notices of interesting lectures and field trips and occasional information about the environment, please send your E-mail addresses and your names to Betty Brody at: [<DeltaChapterNO@aol.com>](mailto:DeltaChapterNO@aol.com).

We promise you will not be bombarded with emails, but will get notices of the Club's interesting lectures and outings, and a few emails about environmental issues from our Membership Chair Aaron Viles.

* Executive Committee meetings are open to all members. If you are interested in attending, please call the New Orleans Group Chair, Darryl Malek-Wiley at 504-865-8708.

Recycle Your Sierra Club Magazines At Our Next Meeting!!

The Sierra Club believes in recycling Right!! Well here is your chance to do your part and maybe enlighten someone who may join our fight to save the planet.

Bring your old Sierra magazines to the monthly Sierra Club meetings held the 2nd Sunday of every month at our usual meeting location - the Dominican Conference Center at 540 Broadway St. Just one block towards the river from St. Charles. We will have a recycling bin to drop them off. One idea has been to use as many copies as possible for Earth Day in Baton Rouge and New Orleans coming up this April, where we are able to hand out lots of stuff to kids and families. We would love to see you and your old Sierra magazines at the meeting!!!

ENVIRONMENTAL HAPPY HOUR

Come one, come all for the happy hour that celebrates all things environmental. Meet activists, organizers, and interested others. Really though, it's just an excuse to get together, share stories and hang out. If you work on environmental issues, lead canoe trips, or simply like the company of good-hearted folks, bring a friend and come on out. 6pm-until? Takes place the third Thursday of each month. For more info, contact Aaron at 504-314-0773.



PCBS – PERSISTENT CUMULATIVE BIOTOXINS?

Any chemistry major or environmental activist knows it really stands for polychlorinated biphenyls but this definition means more to the layperson or victim. Like Dioxins, PCBs are not like naturally occurring compounds: they are persistent in the environment (long after their production they retain their chemical make-up); they tend to accumulate in organisms (uptake is much faster than excretion); and they affect critical biological functions (especially during the important physical development stages). Also like Dioxins, they have their origins in rampant industrial growth.

Unlike Dioxins, PCBs were produced on purpose. For decades Monsanto (now Solutia) produced PCBs in Anniston and released this chemical into waterways and landfills. Now some residents have the highest concentrations of PCBs in their blood of anyone ever tested anywhere.

Company documents show that for more than two decades after ending production, Monsanto withheld detailed information about the contamination in Anniston. The documents also show some state officials knew about the PCB problem, but did nothing to protect the people of Anniston or towns downstream. After stopping PCB production in 1971, Monsanto still discharged the compound into local waterways as a by-product of related chemical manufacture. (View the history of Anniston's PCB legacy at Environmental Working Group's website <www.chemicalindustryarchives.org/dirtysecrets/anniston/1.asp>; also see <www.cwmg.org/Alabama.html> for a short background of pollution in Anniston & other pertinent information.)

When finally confronted with the magnitude of the problem, Monsanto's solution was to buy residents out and bulldoze their neighborhoods. The tactic was aimed at clearing out potential plaintiffs and it worked to some extent. Further help in avoiding responsibility came in special favors from the Bush Administration; these include granting Solutia a Partial Consent Decree which mandates them to perform a risk assessment (something normally done by the EPA) and not requiring the company to clean up any of the contamination.

CHEMICAL WEAPONS INCINERATION MAKES NO SENSE

The chemical demilitarization program is ten years behind schedule and 550% over its original budget. Current cost estimates are understated. Cost estimates and schedules were designed to please Congress, not to reflect reality.

In violation of the intent of Congressional directives, the Army has consistently rushed to advance a program with a technology that has not been tested and risk assessments that have not been completed. Despite Congressional requirements to proceed incrementally, construction on the first continental incineration site at Tooele, Utah began before operational verification at the pilot site in the Pacific was completed.

Currently, the Army is attempting to sidestep the permitting process in Oregon, Arkansas, and Alabama to rush construction at these sites before proving that the technology is successful and that it will not endanger public health, safety, and the environment.

Incineration of chemical weapons presents an imminent threat to public health. The release of small amounts of chemical warfare agents can be lethal. Smokestack technologies, such as incineration increase the probability of catastrophic accidental release. Routine smokestack emissions of dioxins, heavy metals, and numerous other highly toxic chemicals jeopardize those downwind.

The pilot program in the Pacific has been plagued with serious and dangerous problems. The Army's own documents describe an unreliable technology that leaks, jams, bursts, and breaks down. The Army and its contractor in Utah, EG&G, have been charged with using "fear and intimidation" to threaten workers who attempt to address safety issues at the Tooele incinerator plant.

Test burns in Alabama and Oregon have involved inappropriate methods or resulted in outright failure. Storage is not an acceptable solution, but until the incinerator and the Army's plan is safe, that is what you have – continued storage.

- AL Chapter, Sierra Club

BUFFALO COVE (Continued)

stop (including lunch, which was provided by Maura Wood) and lots of exchanges among people of the different groups during the travel between locations. It was a very successful outing in many respects; first, it provided many of the project participants their first glimpse at the actual site of the project and their first real opportunity to visualize the effects of the project, and second, in that it allowed many of the project participants to get to know each other and understand each other's points of view a little better.

The provided a public forum for the participating agencies to inform people about the project and for Sierra Club members and other members of the public to voice their opinions of the project. Delta Chapter Atchafalaya Committee Chair Charlie Fryling did a masterful job of organizing and managing the workshop, supported by Maura Wood and numerous other members. Mark Wingate of the USACE delivered an extensive presentation on the objectives, plans, and anticipated results of the project, and each of the participating federal and state agencies also had representatives present, each of whom expressed complete support for the project and its objectives.

There was a great public turnout for the event, with over one hundred people present. Several members of the audience took the opportunity at the end of the program to ask their questions and express their concerns about and/or support of the project. The primary concerns expressed at the workshop involved unknown, unforeseeable effects of the project and the dredging of new channels and closing of natural channels in lieu of reopening natural bayous that have been blocked off by the numerous oil and gas canals that crisscross the area.

The implementation plan is based on a program of installing elements, monitoring the effects of those elements, and modifying the elements as necessary based on monitoring results, which the Corps contends should minimize any detrimental effects of problem elements. It is unclear, but the choice of dredged channels in lieu of natural waterways seems to stem from property ownership issues and the preferred use of public lands for project elements.



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