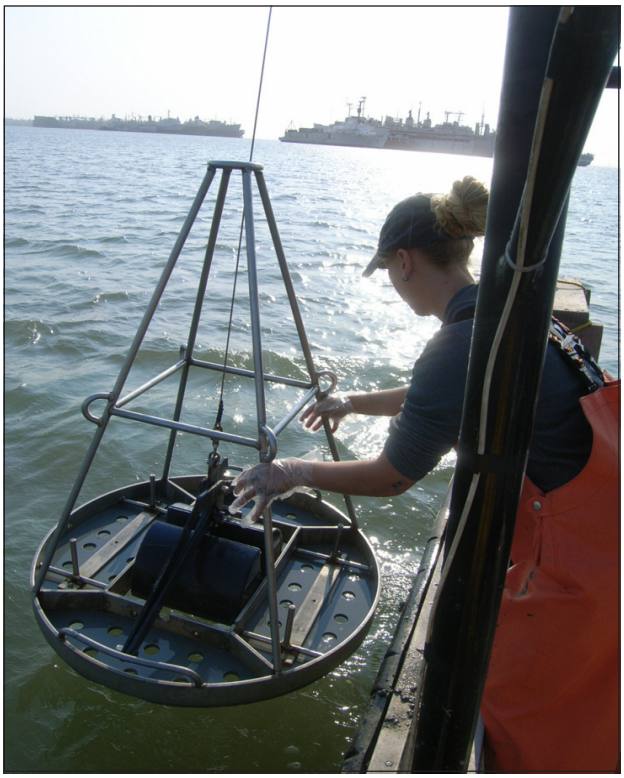
Office of Response and Restoration • Office of Habitat Conservation • General Counsel for Natural Resources

Suisun Bay National Reserve Fleet Assessment Project

Update – JULY 2008

NOAA's Office of Response and Restoration is investigating environmental contaminants in and around the National Reserve Fleet in Suisun Bay, California. In the spring, NOAA and numerous stakeholders developed a sampling and analysis plan for collecting sediment and tissue samples from within the Reserve Fleet boundaries and various locations throughout the project area. During July, NOAA scientists collected surface and subsurface sediments and resident clams for analysis of a variety of contaminants including heavy metals and other antifouling agents from just over 70 station locations. The following information is part of a continuing series of monthly project 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.



Photo, above left: A VanVeen sampler is used to collect surface sediment samples. The sediment in this grab sampler will be transferred to glass jars for shipping to the analytical laboratories.

Photo, above right: NOAA scientist screens sediment samples for the presence of paints chips.

Photo, bottom right: Sediment samples were screened for paint chips and other debris. Some samples contained large amounts of juvenile resident clams.

Photo, above: Scientist deploying Vibracore for sampling.

Recent Progress

The field work scheduled for July was successful, with samples acquired from all but one location where safety concerns precluded sampling. Some sample locations had to be adjusted slightly due to accessibility issues.

Scientists used a metal hinged bucket known as a Van-Veen grab to collect surface sediment samples. The grab, when dropped to the bay floor, collected an intact chunk of surface sediment. The sediment was photographed, homogenized, and transferred to laboratory-cleaned jars and shipped to several analytical laboratories. Additionally, surface sediment samples were sieved and visually examined at the field lab for paint chips or other debris.

Subsurface sediment samples were collected with a Vibracore apparatus, which pushed a long metal tube into the bay floor using a vibratory hammer. The tube was pushed to a maximum depth of eight feet, or less if compacted sediments limited penetration. Specific depth segments were processed in a manner similar to the surface sediments.

The United States Maritime Administration (MARAD) Suisun Fleet manager and his staff provided excellent logistic support to the sampling teams. MARAD also coordinated closely with NOAA to conduct tours for government representatives, including congressional staff, of the sample collection and processing activities.

Next Steps

The sampling team is finishing the field documentation and reporting tasks. In August, transplanted mussels that were placed around the site to assess contaminant bioavailability will be collected and processed. This will complete the field work. The laboratory data are not expected back until early October.

Suisun Bay Timeline

2008

- **J, 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:** July: Field work
- **J, A, S:** July to September: Chemical analysis of samples
- **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

2009

- **J, F:** February 2009: Finalize report

For More Information

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