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

Suisun Bay National Reserve Fleet Assessment Project

Update – OCTOBER, 2008

NOAA's Office of Response and Restoration is investigating environmental contaminants in and around the National Reserve Fleet in Suisun Bay, California. In July and August NOAA's team collected surface and subsurface sediment samples, as well as tissue samples from mussels and clams. These samples were analyzed in the laboratory during late August through October for contaminants, and data are now being reviewed, validated, and entered into a database. A data report is planned for early 2009. This fact sheet is part of continuing series of monthly updates.

Recent Progress

Additional analysis was performed on sediment samples suspected of containing paint chips or metal debris. Using higher magnification equipment than was available in the field, NOAA scientists re-examined a subset of the surface samples to determine whether they contained paint chips. A total of 73 samples were evaluated in the field in July. Of these, 18 samples were set aside due to the presence of material of interest in the field and were evaluated in greater detail at the NOAA laboratory. Further evaluation revealed:

- 3 had naturally occurring debris (crystalline structure)
- 2 archived samples had no debris of note
- 12 classified as metal debris (of those 5 exhibited paint)
- 1 additional sample classified solely as a paint chip

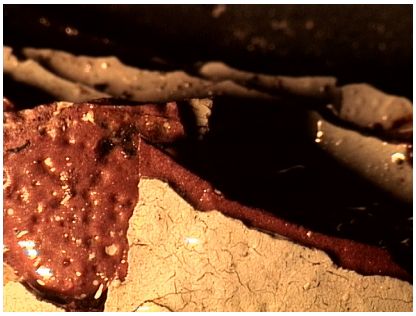
The sediment data have all been delivered by the analytical laboratories and undergone data validation.

Both metal debris and a paint chip were found in this surface sediment sample collected in the reserve fleet area.

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.

NOAA conducted a web-ex virtual meeting with project stakeholders on October 31, which reviewed the project status, discussed preliminary paint chip data results, and demonstrated the operation of Query Manager using existing datasets from the San Francisco Bay area.

Surface sediment samples were sieved in the field for paint chips. This is the largest paint chip that the team found. In other samples, it was difficult to distinguish paint and metal debris.



Under the microscope in the lab, it was determined that this piece of suspected debris is a small piece of metal, with layers of paint.

Next Steps

Laboratory analysis of the tissue samples is ongoing. The tissue samples should be back and through data validation by mid-November.

All of the data will be put into Query Manager, NOAA's environmental data management and query tool. Sediment data is currently in the process of being incorporated. These data will be distributed to stakeholders and the public via Query Manager in December. NOAA has chosen Query Manager as the method for data delivery because it is freely distributed, easy to use, and will allow users to search and map the data themselves. Additionally, NOAA has previously built an extensive Query Manager database for San Francisco Bay over the last several years. Using the same data format will allow users to readily compare these new data to the broader regional database. The Query Manager application and the existing San Francisco Bay database may be downloaded at:
http://response.restoration.noaa.gov/querymanager

Work to analyze the data and develop a draft report continues. The NOAA team is scheduled to produce an internal outline for the report by late November, with a first draft to be released for stakeholder review in mid-December. We will request comments on this draft by mid-January.

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