

Suisun Bay National Reserve Fleet Assessment Project

Update – APRIL 2008

N OAA's Office of Response and Restoration is investigating environmental contaminants in and around the National Reserve Fleet in Suisun Bay, California. More than 70 obsolete or decommissioned vessels make up the fleet, which is maintained by the United States Maritime Administration (MARAD). The State of California and various environmental groups raised



MARAD and NOAA officials during the April tour of the Reserve Fleet (NOAA photo)

concerns about potential contamination released from the fleet vessels into San Francisco Bay. Congress responded to these concerns by funding NOAA to design and implement a study of contaminants in the vicinity

of the fleet. Potential concerns include the presence of heavy metals and anti-fouling agents in the paint that is peeling off of the vessels as well as PCBs and other hazardous materials. This fact sheet is part of a continuing series of monthly project updates.

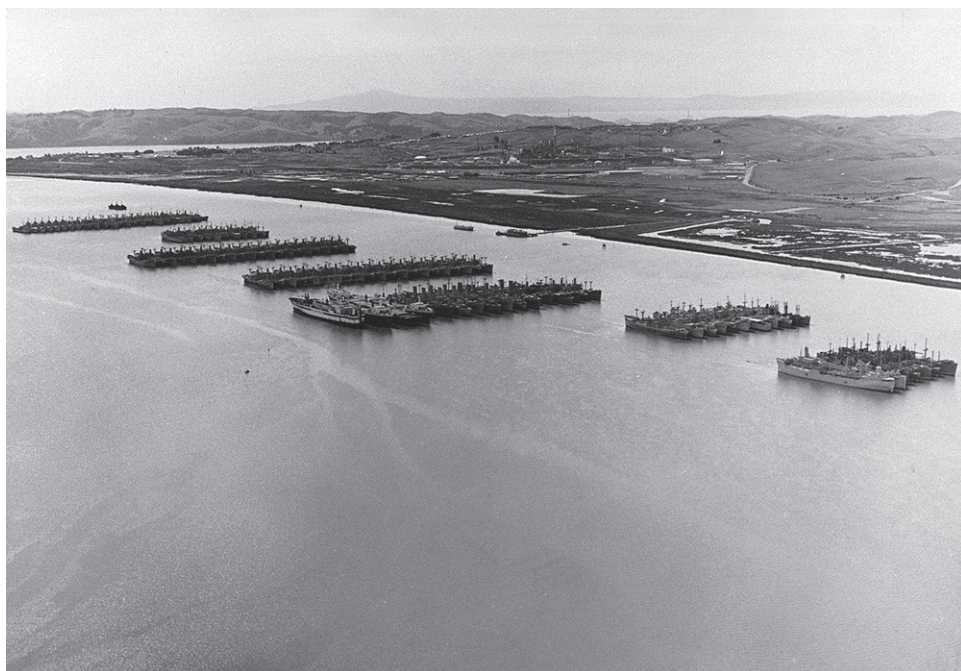
Recent Progress

- The NOAA project leads met with officials from MARAD in Washington, DC to discuss the project scope and gather technical and background information on the Reserve Fleet.
- NOAA released a draft version of the sampling plan and hosted a web-assisted meeting with stakeholders to explain the study approach and answer questions.

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 received comments on the draft sampling plan from stakeholders, and staff are working to revise the plan based on the technical input received.
- MARAD provided historical fleet inventory listings and bathymetric surveys of the fleet area. Both the California State Lands Commission and MARAD provided historical photos of the reserve fleet. The U.S. Geological Survey, the California Department of Toxic Substances Control, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers also provided useful historical and background data. This information is very helpful to

Historic photo of the reserve fleet from the 1950s (photo courtesy of MARAD)



the sample design team and will be used to refine sampling locations.

- NOAA's project team and a representative from U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer's office were given a tour of the reserve fleet by MARAD's Fleet Program Manager in Suisun Bay. The group examined the rafts of ships and observed widely varying levels of peeling paint on the ship superstructures. Several adjustments are being made to the sampling plan based on site accessibility and other logistical issues learned during the site visit.

Next Steps

- On May 19th, NOAA will release the draft final version of the sampling plan to stakeholders. A follow-up conference call with the stakeholders will be held on June 2nd to describe how the plan has changed and answer questions.
- NOAA is contracting with several firms to secure boats and equipment for the field sampling and analytical laboratory services to analyze the samples.



Seven rafts of ships similar to this one make up the Reserve Fleet (NOAA photo)

For More Information

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To learn more about this project and NOAA's program to protect and restore natural resources injured by releases of hazardous materials, visit our Web site:

<http://www.darrp.noaa.gov/>

Suisun Bay Timeline

