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KRIS HANSON
On the Waterfront

Have your say on \$36M plan to clean up DDT

LONG BEACH — Anyone visiting local fishing spots has seen the signs: “Do Not Eat White Croaker” or “No Coma ‘White Croakers.’”

If the big red X through an image of the forbidden bottom-feeding fish isn't enough, there's the sobering explanation that consuming it may damage the liver, shock the central nervous system and cause cancer.

Of course, it's not the fish itself that's a problem, but the banned pesticide DDT embedded in the fish's fat.

So alas, decades after the bug-killer was banned, DDT continues to wreak havoc on the fragile ecosystem off our coast.

Last week, after years of study, federal authorities announced a \$36 million solution to clean the mess up, but first they need the public's input. A series of hearings this week will discuss that plan and seek input on alternatives.

The hearings are listed below, but first the solution.

The plan is to “encase” about 320 acres of toxic DDT sludge on the ocean floor off Palos Verdes and San Pedro with an 18-inch layer of clean mud.

The chemicals were dumped there between 1947 and the early 1970s by a now-defunct Torrance-based pesticide producer, Montrose Chemical.

Covering the poisonous mounds would prevent dispersion, and over time, the theory goes, DDT would break down and dissolve into less harmful components. Eventually, everything would return to normal, and people could again happily consume white croaker and other rockfish.

The encasement approach is generally supported by environmentalists, though many want to see the size of the project expanded to 640 acres.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency plans to spend \$36 million on the job in coming years — funding culled from a 1990 settlement between Montrose Chemical and the government.

So what do you think?

The hearings are 3 to 5 p.m. today, Cabrillo Beach House, 3800 Stephen White Drive in San Pedro; 7 to 9 p.m. Wednesday, Banning's Landing, 100 E. Water St. in Wilmington; 7 to 9 p.m. Thursday, Palos Verdes Library, 701 Silver Spur Road in Rolling Hills Estates.

Comments can also be submitted through July 15 to C.R. White, U.S. EPA, Region IX, 75 Hawthorne St., San Francisco, CA 94105.

The cleanup plan is available online at www.epa.gov/region09/superfund/pvshelf.

Authorities hope to get started on the final phase of their cleanup in 2010.



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What's on at s

• Tell us all about your favorite events at your favorite beach-area Tuesday festival showcase each week.

We want to hear about your favorite jog-a-thons, carnivals and more. We also want to hear about our outstanding members who deserve special recognition.

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