

San Jacinto River Waste Pits Public Meeting

The Galveston Bay Foundation, in conjunction with the Houston Advanced Research Center (HARC), organized a [public meeting](#) on January 24, 2013 @ 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm at the J.D. Walker Community Center, 7613 Wade Road, Baytown, TX to discuss the San Jacinto Waste Pits Superfund Site.

The first half of the meeting was specific to the San Jacinto Waste Pits site, with Jennifer Ronk providing an overview of the San Jacinto River Waste Pits background, the Superfund Process, and the time critical removal action (TCRA) that was completed to prevent direct contact with waste and to prevent ongoing release of waste material into the river. Dr. Beauchamp of the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) then discussed exposure pathways and threats to human health from the site.

The second half of the meeting was intended to discuss broader issues related to the San Jacinto River. Linda Broach of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality discussed other sources of dioxin and PCBs, and discussed the broader picture of these contaminants in the Galveston Bay system and tributaries. Rachel Powers of the Houston-Galveston Area Council talked about how this related to the Dioxin Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Project to Reduce Pollution in the Galveston Bay system and tributaries. Michael Tennant, Texas Department of State Health Services discussed the seafood consumption advisories in the area.

A Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study is being carried out to address the nature and extent of contamination so that an appropriate remedy can be selected. Based on the information provided by Dr. Beauchamp, the two ways that people could be exposed to dioxin are from skin contact with the waste material and through eating contaminated seafood. An “armored cap” has been placed on the waste pits to stabilize the waste and to prevent direct human contact with the waste materials.

Dioxins have been found in certain fish and crabs at concentrations which have prompted the state health department to issue seafood consumption advisories in Galveston Bay and its tidal tributaries, such as the San Jacinto River. It is important to follow the [seafood consumption advisories](#) in order to protect your health. Data that indicate that there are other sources of dioxin pollution to Galveston Bay, as noted by “hot spots” of sediment dioxin concentrations above background concentrations, e.g. Patrick Bayou. The TMDL project goal is to identify the sources of the pollution and ultimately find ways to reduce concentrations in the seafood.

As the process continues, there will be more opportunities to learn more at public meetings, and to comment on the proposed plan. Please stay involved in the process, participate in meetings, read information, ask questions, and make sure that your voice is heard!

The presentation slides can be found by [clicking here](#).

The meeting’s Frequently Asked Questions and answers can be found by [clicking here](#).

For more information on the site, please visit http://galvbay.org/advocacy_sjrw.html.

The EPA is overseeing the cleanup of the pits, which received wastes from the Champion Paper mill in the 1960s. These wastes contain dioxins, which are toxic and can cause increased risk of cancer and other threats to human health such as liver damage and birth defects.