



**GALVESTON BAY
FOUNDATION**



TEXAS

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Press Conference to be held at 11am on Tuesday, September 5, 2017 at the San Jacinto River Waste Pits (nearest address 18001 East Freeway, Channelview, TX 77530)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Inspect the San Jacinto River Waste Pits Superfund Site and Immediately Remove the Toxic Wastes as Soon as Possible

Houston, TX – September 3, 2017 - In the aftermath of the disastrous Tropical Storm Harvey flooding, Galveston Bay Foundation, San Jacinto River Coalition and Coastal Conservation Association – Texas are calling on the U.S. EPA to inspect the cap at the San Jacinto River Waste Pits Superfund Site in Channelview, make any temporary repairs immediately, and then permanently remove the risk as soon as it is possible.

Scott Jones, Director of Advocacy for Galveston Bay Foundation, stated, “This latest flood event reiterates our position that the dioxin wastes at the site, much of it located literally in the San Jacinto River in times of normal flows, should be fully removed as quickly as possible. A tidal river in a region known for hurricane strikes and prone to floods is not the location to attempt to contain toxic waste.”

The community, the first responders, the recreational and commercial fishermen and crabbers, tourists and eco tourists, and the related businesses should not have to worry about these toxic wastes being released to the river and Galveston Bay every time it floods or when a hurricane storm surge threatens our vulnerable area.

“The Waste Pits present an unacceptable health risk to our first responders and our entire region. At this point, we have no way of knowing what toxic chemicals are lurking in the floodwaters. For years our communities and local government have told the EPA it is not a matter of if, but when, a storm devastates the Pits. We all need to work together to see this unacceptable risk removed from our waterways,” stated Jackie Young, Executive Director of the Texas Health & Environment Alliance.

The armored cap, made of a liner and rocks, has already suffered multiple impacts from lesser flood events on the San Jacinto since it was installed in 2011. We should not have to depend on an “enhanced” version of the cap, the kind envisioned by the companies responsible for the wastes, as the

permanent solution to protect us for the 750 years it will take for the dioxin to degrade to a concentration safe for humans and wildlife. That is an unacceptable risk for the community to bear. Unfortunately, we will see many 100- or 500-year floods and hurricanes during that time period. As we have seen the last few years, we can have a 100-year flood event every year on the Upper Texas Gulf Coast.

Shane Bonnot, Advocacy Director for CCA-Texas, stated, “The dioxin in the Pits has the potential to devastate the Galveston Bay recreational and commercial fishing industries, and the businesses that depend upon them. That is a risk we can no longer take.”

Therefore, we again call for the EPA to make a final decision right now to best ensure the waste is fully removed before the next storm hits. The site was discovered in 2005 and placed on the Superfund list in 2008. It is time for this very real threat to our health and economy to be removed once and for all.

Finally, we also call on the EPA and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality to take a fresh look and review other toxic waste containment sites in the Houston-Galveston area under their purview to determine if they present an unacceptable risk to human and environmental health. Unfortunately, many such sites may exist in our region.



San Jacinto River Waste Pits post Harvey. Photo: NOAA



Damaged cap at berm. Photo: San Jacinto River Coalition

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