

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 14, 2022

Robert M. Califf
Commissioner
Food and Drug Administration
10903 New Hampshire Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20993

Dear Commissioner Califf,

Thank you for your public service. We write to request that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) collect samples of fish or shellfish off the coast of southern California to test for dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT), its degradants, and associated compounds. EPA estimates over 1,700 tons of DDT were released into the Pacific Ocean via the Joint Water Pollution Control Plant from the late 1950s to the early 1970s largely because of wastewater discharges from former manufacturer of DDT, Montrose Chemical Corporation¹. Recent findings by a joint survey conducted by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and Scripps Institute of Oceanography² have revised these estimates upwards.

To address this environmental hazard, in November 2021, we sent a letter to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requesting that these agencies take the actions necessary to assess if DDT is causing a spike in cancer in humans. In their response, HHS shared that “No violative pesticide findings in fish or shellfish were reported in the last five annual pesticide reports; however, no samples are known to have been collected off the coast of southern California.” That response is why we are requesting that the FDA collect samples off the southern California coast to test for DDT as part of their pesticide monitoring program.

DDT and its degradants are known to accumulate in living organisms working their way up from the seabed, through living creatures and into the systems of apex predators. Concerning data from the Marine Mammal Center, based in Sausalito, California, has shown that this issue is heavily affecting the region’s sea lion population. They have found frighteningly high rates of carcinoma in areas where sea lions would have been exposed to DDT³. If marine species commonly harvested as seafood are exposed to – and accumulate – DDT, this could be a major concern to individuals across the country who consume fish sourced in California. It is therefore imperative that we continue doing our best to understand the effects of these dumping grounds and the impact on human health.

We look forward to your timely response. Thank you for your help on this important issue.

Sincerely,

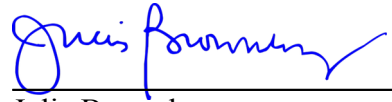
¹ <https://cumulis.epa.gov/supercpad/SiteProfiles/index.cfm?fuseaction=second.cleanup&id=0900993>

² Lauren Fimbers Wood, “Scripps Oceanography Completes Seafloor Survey Using Robotics, Finds Thousands of Possible Targets of Interest at Dumpsite Off Coast of Los Angeles”, April 26 2021

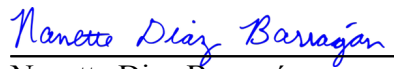
³ Frances Gulland, “Persistent Contaminants and Herpesvirus OthV1 Are Positively Associated With Cancer in Wild California Sea Lions”, December 10 2020



Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress



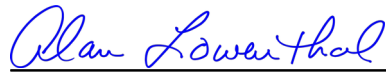
Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress



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