

Dr. Howard Frumkin
Office of the Director, NCEH/ATSDR
Century Center
1825 Century Boulevard
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April 10, 2006

Petition for Health Consultation -Saginaw River Saginaw County Michigan

Dear Dr. Frumkin,

We are writing on behalf of our organizations and as individual residents to petition the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry for a public health assessment regarding potential public health hazards in Saginaw County and Bay County Michigan, along the length of the Saginaw River from its confluence with the Tittabawassee River to the Saginaw Bay of Lake Huron and associated with the extensive and serious dioxin- furan contamination found in the sediments of the Saginaw River. The primary source of this dioxin-furan contamination is the Dow Chemical Company.

Our petition is prompted by the following facts, which have emerged over the last few years:

- ATSDR and Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) already deemed the Tittabawassee River floodplain community merited a health assessment because of high levels of dioxin -furans in the Tittabawassee River and floodplain.
- The contaminated sediments and soils of the Tittabawassee River and floodplain are the source of dioxin to the Saginaw River.
- US Environmental Protection Agency, US Army Corp of Engineers and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality sampling have all revealed sediments of the Saginaw River to have high concentrations of dioxin. The highest concentration found to date is 16,000 ppt., although levels of 11,000 ppt, 8,000ppt, 6000ppt and 3,000ppt have been measured throughout the Saginaw River.
- During the late summer of 2005 Michigan Department of Community Health and Michigan Department of Environmental Quality posted fish advisories the entire length of the Saginaw River because of dioxin contamination.
- Dow Chemical's RCRA Corrective Action license lists the Saginaw River as an area subject to response and cleanup activities because of the high levels of dioxin.
- There are great number of subsistence anglers (men and women) along the Saginaw River. Many of these residents are people of colors who may also be indigent and who rely on the fish from these contaminated waters to nourish

their families. Several reports have documented the continued consumption of fish by area residents.

- In the summer months the Saginaw River is heavily fished by migrant workers and their families.

The Saginaw River travels north through the heavily populated communities of Saginaw and Bay City Michigan. Numerous fishing docks, launch sites and public parks permit easy access to the river and contact with contaminated sediments, soils and fish. Many people own homes or live in communities that border the Saginaw River.

The science supporting the link between dioxins and human health effects is strong and growing. It is time for a public health assessment by ATSDR and appropriate protective actions by federal, state and local agencies to prevent further exposures to dioxin and to assess its impact on residents along the Saginaw River.

The data on the Saginaw River is simply the latest in a long line of disclosures about dioxin contamination in the Saginaw Bay Watershed. Further, rather than taking action to protect the public from the serious soil contamination documented in the sampling of sediments in the Saginaw River, or moving quickly to characterize the extent of the dioxin contamination, the State of Michigan instead met with Dow for 8 months of private discussions. These discussions did not include anyone from the Michigan Department of Public Health or other agencies whose role it is to solely protect public health. During those discussions interim response and cleanup activities were stalled. Therefore exposures continue. When they emerged from these meetings, the agreed upon "Framework" between Dow and DEQ only tangentially addressed the Saginaw River and with the exception of the signage little has been done to address the public health implications of these high levels of dioxin. This continues to be the case to date.

It is abundantly clear that significant levels of dioxins are present in the river sediments of communities along the Saginaw River. These contaminants may be ingested through fish, consumed in other food, absorbed through dermal contact with sediments and inhaled. It is time for a public health assessment by ATSDR and appropriate protective actions by federal, state and local agencies to prevent further exposures to dioxin and to prevent negative health impacts in the community.

Sincerely,

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