

# Superfund NEWS

March/April 2021

## THEA urges completion of Health Survey

THEA has been compiling information for over a year with its "HEALTH SURVEY." Information from that survey is confidential, but helps the organization monitor health and take action to correct environmental pollution.

Their statement on the survey follows:

"We know for a fact that each of our communities is suffering from abnormally high rates of certain types of cancer. The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) looked at incidence rates for a handful of cancer types in the three communities we work with, and in each one, several of the selected types came back showing unusually high rates.

If these are the results returned after investigating just a handful of cancer types, what does that mean for the other cancer types present in the community that were not investigated?

[That's where our health survey comes in.](#)

We can't work on effective solutions to the public health threats facing our communities until we have a complete understanding of the issue at hand. And we won't have that complete understanding without data for all of the other cancer types present in our communities. Our health survey asks a few questions about the types of cancer your family has experienced. Once we know every type of cancer present in our communities, we can ask the state to investigate rates for all of those types, not just a select view.

With that comprehensive data, we will be better equipped to understand the scope of the health emergencies facing our communities, and better positioned to advocate for an effective solution.

**SEE SURVEY ON PAGE 2. PLEASE COMPLETE AND SUBMIT TO THEA.**

## EPA extends Waste Pits schedule another 270 days, pushes the clean-up start to about 2024

### NO TIME TO WASTE: A Call for Inclusivity and Transparency in the San Jacinto River Waste Pits Superfund

HOUSTON – Jackie Young Medcalf, president of the Texas Health & Environment Alliance (THEA) recently learned that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) authorized a 270-day extension to the design phase of the San Jacinto River Waste Pits Superfund process at the request of the responsible parties (International Paper and Waste Management subsidiary, McGinnis Industrial Maintenance Corporation). This extension is on the heels of a 160-day extension authorized by the EPA in September of 2020.

Medcalf feels that the EPA needs to be more transparent and inclusive in these types of decisions. She feels the first extension allowed time for more testing and sampling, but thinks the new extension will just be an unnecessary delay and have the potential problem of moving remediation work back several years and conflict with a new I-10 bridge that TxDOT plans to build over the San Jacinto River.

The Waste Pits Superfund Site is the result of paper mill waste disposed of along the San Jacinto River in the 1960s. The Waste Pits presented such a threat to the environment and to public health that they were listed for clean-up under the EPA Federal Superfund



Jackie Young Medcalf, THEA president, protests at the Waste Management offices in downtown Houston on April 15.

program in 2008. Currently, remediation of the Waste Pits is in the design phase which was initiated in April of 2018 by a settlement between the EPA and the Waste Pits' responsible parties.

When the 160-day extension was authorized in 2020, THEA did not object to this allowance for further sampling and water treatability studies. Unfortunately, the EPA did not effectively utilize this time and require the responsible parties move swiftly on sampling. This misuse of time is unacceptable to local community members and it is critical that the EPA stop allowing time to be wasted and require expedient and thorough work be

completed. Delays or poorly executed work may pose public health and environmental consequences in surrounding communities for generations to come.

The EPA has ultimate authority and oversight to see that the Waste Pits are removed in a reasonable timeframe and with best management practices to ensure a safe and efficient clean-up. The local community has been left in the dark while time has been wasted.

Problems are best solved with open and transparent communication – which we are lacking for this Superfund Site. It is our impression that the EPA has allowed the focus to be on a singular concept created by the responsible

parties. These are the same parties who made their agenda clear for this site – they wanted to leave the Waste Pits in the San Jacinto River and were forced by federal order to cooperate in this process and to fully remove the Pits.

The EPA must hold polluters accountable and must provide transparent communication to the community. The tension is mounting for local residents and with every hurricane season that approaches, fears heighten of the Pits being further disrupted by Mother Nature. Considering the 270-day extension and procurement time for remedial equipment, this pushes the estimated clean-up start to 2024. The Waste Pits are nestled to the immediate north and south of Interstate 10, which Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) plans to replace starting in the Spring of 2025. Unfortunately, it was announced in 2020 that the remedial timeline adjusted from 2 years to 7 years. Local residents are extremely concerned about how these two major projects will impact one another, and how barge traffic on the River will impact the safety of these efforts. We need to see interagency coordination on these sensitive efforts taking place in the same timeframe, adjacent to one another on the navigable waterway.

The community and our elected officials need to hear from the EPA. We need to be informed and included in the process taking place that not only affects the future of Interstate 10, but the health and safety of the community and Galveston Bay.

-- By J. Medcalf, THEA

### Who is involved in the San Jacinto River Waste Pits Superfund?

#### US EPA

The federal Environmental Protection Agency is the lead in dealing with the Superfund site. Congress has designated them with the responsibility to solve the problem.

#### PRP

Potential Responsible Parties include successors to the perpetrators of the Waste Pits. These include International Paper, and Waste Management.

#### US CONGRESS

Most legislators whose district includes the San Jacinto River, have expressed the need to remove the Waste Pits. This includes Congressmen Gene Green, Brian Babin, Ted Poe and others.

#### HARRIS COUNTY

County Attorney Vince Ryan led a lawsuit to make the Responsible Parties pay for remediation of the site. He won a \$29.2 million dollar judgement to be spent on environmental improvements in the area.

#### SJRC/THEA

A Citizens movement, led by previous Highlands resident Jackie Young, has been the leading voice to have the Waste Pits totally removed. She heads San Jacinto River Coalition, and the new Texas Health and Environmental Alliance, Inc.

#### KEEPITCAPPED

A Citizens Group named San Jacinto Citizens Against Pollution located in Baytown has a web site espousing its belief that a permanent cap is the best solution. Thomas Knickerbocker is their attorney, but the leadership is anonymous.

# THEA Health SURVEY

## Texas Health & Environment Alliance 2021 Community Health Survey

To better serve our communities, we collect health data to support inquiries and investigations into potential increase incidences of disease. If you have lived in a community we serve or have health concerns, please complete the Health Survey Form.

### General Information

Date  Best Phone Number \*  Email \*

Name \*  
First  Last

Address \*  
Address Line 1   
Address Line 2   
City  State  Zip Code

Do you live near a contaminated Site or a Superfund Site? If yes, which one?

- San Jacinto River Waste Pits Superfund Site  
 Jones Road Groundwater Plume Superfund Site  
 Greater 5th Ward Creosote Site  
 North & South Cavalcade Superfund Site  Other Site not listed

How long have you lived at your current address? \*

If less than a year, what was your previous address?

Address Line 1   
Address Line 2   
City  State  Zip Code

Gender

- Male  Female

Date of Birth \*

If there are children (Under 18) in your home what are their ages?

### Water Supply Information (Check All That Apply)

Is the water in your home supplied by a public (city/MUD) or private source (groundwater well)? \*

- Public (City / MUD)  Private Source (Groundwater Well)

If your home is supplied by a groundwater well, do you use the water for drinking water?

- Yes  No

If you use a groundwater well for your drinking water do you have a water filtration system?

- Yes  No

If you have a groundwater well in your home but do not use the well for drinking water, where do you get your drinking water from?

### Health Information

Have you experienced any of the following health conditions, either recently or in the past? (Please check all that apply)

- Sudden weight gain / loss  
 Persistent cough  
 Tumors  
 High blood pressure  
 Easy bleeding / bruising  
 Neurological disorders  
 Vein issues  
 Numbness / Tingling  
 Ringing in ears  
 Nausea  
 Fatigue  
 Kidney Disease  
 Liver issues  
 Ulcers  
 Digestive issues  
 Abdominal pain  
 Anemia  
 Asthma  
 Chronic Bronchitis  
 Cancer  
 Coronary Artery Disease  
 Hepatitis (A, B, or C)  
 Multiple Myeloma  
 Prostrate Disease  
 Stenosis (narrowing of the blood vessels...  
 Melanoma  
 Chloracne  
 Dermatitis  
 Hair loss  
 Thyroid  
 Swollen lymph nodes  
 Heart attack  
 Stroke  
 Seizures  
 Burning in your veins  
 Headaches  
 Tooth and/or Gum issues  
 Vomiting (unexplained)  
 Rashes / Sores  
 Kidney Stones  
 Toenail / Fingernail issues  
 Fertility issues  
 Irregular menstrual cycles  
 Endometriosis  
 Miscarriage(s)  
 Birth defects  
 Childhood learning disorders  
 Arthritis  
 Autoimmune Disease  
 Diabetes  
 Fibromyalgia  
 Insomnia (Trouble sleeping)  
 Neuropathy  
 Sarcoma  
 Glioma  
 Retinoblastoma

If you checked Thyroid, Tumors, Vein Issues, Cancer, Autoimmune Disease, or Diabetes please specify the type and any additional information.

### Pet Information

Please be mindful of your pets and/or livestock, we are concerned about their health as well.

Include pets / livestock illness or diagnosis:

- Dogs  Cats  Livestock

What type of issues do they have?

Comments

The information you provide will remain confidential. The information may be used by THEA to advocate on behalf of the community.

Please mail a copy of the Completed THEA Health Survey to:  
 THEA, 3262 Westheimer Road, #142, Houston, TX 77098 or send a copy by email to:  
 INFO@txhea.org. Thank you for your help.