

Health Consultation – Response to Public Comments –
For “Grassy Island, Detroit River, Wayne County, Michigan”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) asked the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) to evaluate the public health implications of exposure to the chemicals present at Grassy Island, a former diked disposal facility in the Detroit River. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had built dikes around the island and placed dredge spoils there from the Rouge River from 1960 to 1982. As a result, the island’s soils contain elevated levels of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), and metals.

MDCH reviewed environmental data for island soils and nearby Detroit River water and sediments. The agency also reviewed historical data on waterfowl samples taken from the island. While concentrations of some contaminants are higher than generic state or federal screening levels, the concentrations are less than screening levels derived specifically for this site.

The USFWS does not plan to promote the island for public use. MDCH expects little to no human exposure to contaminants on or coming from the island. Trespassing might occur but is not expected to result in sufficient exposure to cause harm. Therefore, the site poses “no apparent public health hazard,” currently or in the future.

Several physical hazards on the island should be addressed to protect trespassers and agency personnel accessing the island. There is an overflow weir on the northeast end of the island that poses an attractive nuisance and possible drowning hazard for children. The slopes of the dikes are steep, which may cause people walking on them to slip and fall. The riprap on the shore makes disembarking treacherous for boaters who might dock at the island. Additionally, the USFWS should include regular dike inspections as part of its management plan for the island and should comply with Michigan Department of Environmental Quality regulations regarding the contamination.

The public-comment version of this health consultation was released on February 6, 2007. MDCH received several comments from private citizens as well as comments from the USFWS and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. Those comments, and MDCH’s response to them, are in an appendix at the back of the finalized document, which is available at the Bacon Memorial Library, in Wyandotte, and on-line at www.michigan.gov/mdch-toxics, under “Health Assessments and Related Documents.”