San Francisco, CA
(San Francisco Co.)
Examiner
(Clr. D. 158,722)

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Allen's P. C. B. Est. 1888

Study to begin on diseased town

1407

TRIANA, Ala. (UPI) — Olympia Vaughn's smile shows brown teeth and wide gaps, her tiny legs are far weaker than those of most 5-year-old children and sometimes they collapse under the weight of her fragile body.

Medical authorities say Olympia's body contains high concentrations of DDT and PCBs, a condition the mayor of Triana said yesterday is similar to health problems for many people in the northern Alabama town of 800 people.

No one really knows if the pesticide DDT and cancer-causing PCBs — polychlorinated biphenyls — found in Olympia are causing her physical problems, and Mayor Clyde Foster's charges have yet to be proved.

But the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta is about to begin a major study on the effects of DDT and PCB on the human body, and Foster and others maintain the town's residents have been eating contaminated fish for years.

The CDC study could take years to complete and Foster says he's not that overwhelmed with the $100,000 Environmental Protection Agency planning grant made available for the research.

The EPA earlier pinpointed the source of the DDT contamination as an Army-owned, abandoned DDT plant in the area formerly operated by the Olin Chemical Corp. It closed in 1971.

The search for the cause of the PCB pollution continues.

Oakland, CA
(Alameda Co.)
Tribune
(Clr. D. 166,413)
(Clr. S. 183,341)

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Mayor upset over another health study

1407

TRIANA, Ala. (AP) — The mayor of this tiny town in northeastern Alabama says he's not impressed with a federal health agency's plan to conduct a study of the effect of hazardous wastes on his people.

Mayor Clyde Foster says his town needs medical help now, not another study.

Triana residents once ate fish caught from nearby streams for their primary source of food, until researchers found that those fish contained high levels of the pesticide DDT, as well as PCB, a cancer-causing substance.

The DDT is believed to have been discharged from an abandoned chemical plant nearby. No one is sure where the PCB is coming from.

The Atlanta-based Centers for Disease Control will use a $100,000 grant from the Environmental Protection Agency to study how humans are affected by hazardous waste, said Georgi Jones, chief of the CDC's Superfund implementation group.

The CDC's preliminary tests of 458 Triana residents showed that they averaged 14 times more DDT in their bodies than the average person.

Foster says residents have a higher than normal cancer rate and that children show signs of poor development and malnutrition. Many of the children also are hyperactive.

"Everyone says how bad it is what is going on in Triana," Foster said. "But although we have people up here that are sick and dying, no one wants to accept the responsibility for it."

Little is known about the effects of DDT and PCB on humans. Without further study, experts say it would be impossible to say whether the chemicals are to blame for the health problems.

The DDT contamination was discovered in 1977. A survey conducted by the Army revealed that high levels of DDT had contaminated soils, sediment, fish and wildlife on the Army's Redstone Arsenal near Huntsville and downstream of the DDT discharge.

The pesticide was traced to an abandoned DDT plant near Triana, formerly operated by Olin Chemical Corp. The EPA and the Army have filed suit against the company to force it to clean up the site.

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