

Julia Mullen

Reference

From: MilWaste Program [milwaste@hampshire.edu]
Sent: Friday, October 18, 2002 7:32 AM
To: ISIS MilWaste Mailing List
Subject: [isis-milwaste] ISIS MilWaste Seminar on Perchlorate and Human Health on Cape Cod

Dear Colleagues,

ISIS MilWaste Program and the Association for the Preservation of Cape Cod co-sponsored a seminar in Bourne, Massachusetts, led by Prof. Tom Zoeller, of the Univ. of Massachusetts Amherst Biology Department, on "Perchlorate and Human Health Effects" on Wednesday, October 16th. This seminar was organized in response to community interest in hearing more from scientists about the perchlorate issue, the presence of which has closed several drinking water wells in the Town of Bourne, Cape Cod, Massachusetts.

The session was well-received and informative, and was attended by community members, EPA officials, base cleanup management, the press, and other interested parties. ISIS MilWaste has a tape recording and accompanying presentation materials from Prof. Zoeller. Email "milwaste@hampshire.edu" if you are interested in receiving a copy.

Below is the coverage from the Cape Cod Times:

Scientist: It's hard to determine safe levels

By ERIC WILLIAMS
STAFF WRITER

BOURNE - Chemistry class convened in Cataumet last night. The specific topic? Perchlorate, the substance that shut down three water supply wells used by the Bourne Water District.

University of Massachusetts biology professor Thomas Zoeller discussed the affects of perchlorate on the thyroid, particularly concentrating on its possible impact on developing fetuses and infants, at a seminar at the Cataumet United Methodist Church.

About 30 people attended the event sponsored by the Institute for Science and Interdisciplinary Studies, an academic organization based at Hampshire College in Amherst.

"The EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) is getting ready to make a proclamation," said Zoeller. "A level of perchlorate around which they're going to regulate. Young children and fetuses are clearly the most vulnerable."

Zoeller is a member of a review board assembled by the EPA to review a draft recommendation that could establish a regulatory standard that allows only 1 part-per-billion (ppb) of perchlorate in water.

Much of the debate has revolved around what level of perchlorate is acceptable. Indeed, Zoeller was asked that question last night. He hemmed and hawed a bit.

"For rats, I could pick a number," said Zoeller. "It wouldn't bother me. I



wouldn't care. But as a parent, you have to be conservative. Because you're looking at the life of a kid."

Zoeller said it was difficult to pinpoint the affect of the chemical on human fetuses and infants, because, of course, it is unethical to introduce perchlorate to them. And rat studies didn't thrill him either.

"A rat isn't a good model for humans because they don't do the sort of things that we do. Their intellectual cognitive function isn't the same.

"You'd want to go to something that's closer, like monkeys," said Zoeller.

"That's probably not going to happen because it would take an enormous amount of time and be enormously expensive."

Perchlorate is an ingredient in rocket propellants. Investigators say contamination found on the Massachusetts Military Reservation could have been left at artillery target areas and gun positions on Camp Edwards during years of military training.

While the chemical has been found as high as 300 ppb on base, it has been found at only 1 ppb near Bourne water supplies.

The substance has been linked to thyroid conditions (which in children could include delayed development and decreased learning capabilities), and is creeping off nearby Camp Edwards toward the Bourne water supply.

Traces of the chemical were found in or near three water supply wells used by the Bourne Water District to serve about half the town's 19,000 residents. The wells, which provide about 70 percent of the district's water, have been shut down since July.

The district includes neighborhoods in Cataumet, Pocasset, Monument Beach and along the Cape Cod Canal.

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