



TANAPAG VILLAGE PCBs

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY • REGION IX • SEPTEMBER 2005

EPA SAMPLING RESULTS SHOW LAND CRABS SAFE TO EAT

This fact sheet has been produced by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to communicate to the Tanapag Village community the results from the February 2005 land crab sampling in and around the village. Along with this fact sheet, EPA is providing its recommendation to the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Department of Public Health (DPH) regarding the existing Tanapag land crab public health advisory. Results from the recent testing show that the PCB levels in Tanapag land crabs have decreased significantly now that it is several years after soil cleanup and the elimination of the source of PCBs. Therefore, EPA is recommending to CNMI DPH that the public health advisory for Tanapag land crabs which has been in effect since 2001 be reduced.

BACKGROUND

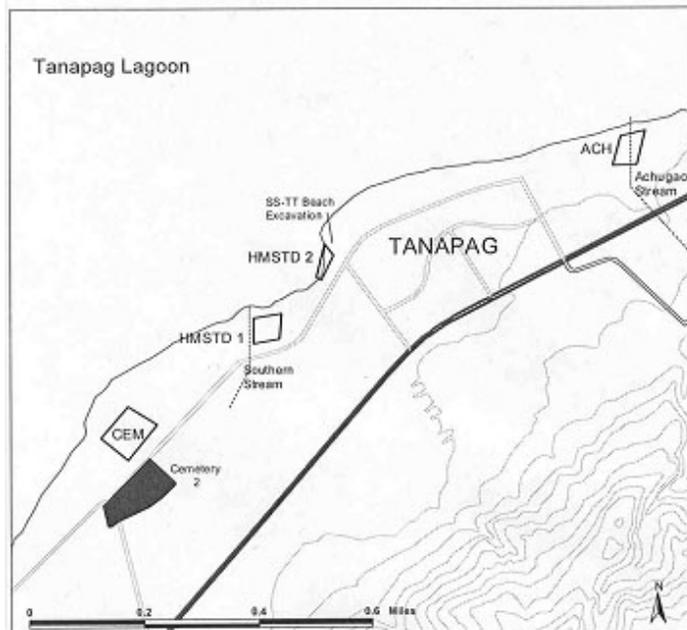
In 2000, EPA conducted sampling of land crabs in the Tanapag area to determine whether the crabs were impacted by the PCB contamination in Tanapag Village. This sampling of 100 land crabs showed elevated levels of PCBs in crabs from the areas around the Lower Base Cemetery and Homestead 2 (Beach Park) and some less elevated levels of PCBs in the crabs from the Homestead 1 and Achugao Stream areas (see map below). While the PCB levels found in the crabs were well below the standard established by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, based on the uncertainty about the effects of low-level PCB consumption EPA and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry made a recommendation to the CNMI DPH to issue a health advisory warning against consumption of the crabs caught in these areas. CNMI DPH issued the advisory in July 2001 as a protective health measure for the people of the island.

In June 2003, the Army Corps of Engineers completed the cleanup of the Tanapag PCB site and restoration of the Lower Base Cemetery and all other sites in Tanapag Village. At the request of the CNMI DPH and the CNMI Division of Environmental Quality (DEQ), EPA returned to re-sample the Tanapag land crabs in February 2005. During the 2005 sampling event, 90 land crabs from the same locations as the 2000 sampling were collected for analysis to determine if the crabs were now safe to eat.

In addition to PCBs, during the 2005 sampling EPA looked for pesticides such as DDT and related compounds. Pesticides were looked for because the 2000 crab samples showed the possibility that pesticides might be in the crabs. The newest data, collected in 2005, shows that pesticides are not present at levels that would pose a public health threat.

2005 RESULTS SUMMARY

Results of the 2005 sampling of land crabs show PCBs and pesticides at levels which would not harm human health. Roughly 70% of all land crabs tested showed no presence of PCBs. All crabs collected from Homestead 1 were clean; that is, no PCBs were detected. PCBs were not found in most of the crabs in Cemetery 2 and Achugao Stream. Less than half of the crabs caught at Smiling Cove (background location) had no PCBs. Only 30% of all land crabs tested in 2005 showed detectable levels of PCBs compared to 85% of crabs in 2000 which had detectable levels of PCBs. This information shows that the cleanup of the PCBs in Tanapag has lowered the levels of PCBs in the land crabs so that they are safe to eat, with the exception of one area. While the highest PCB concentration in land crabs from Homestead 2 (Beach Park) has been reduced significantly, low levels of PCB contamination remain in the crabs from this area. Therefore, if you consume crabs from the Homestead 2 area only, we recommend that you eat no more than 12 crab meals per month. If you eat land crabs from a variety



of locations around Tanapag, including Homestead 2, there are no limits on how many crab meals you can eat each month. Based on this new information, EPA is recommending that the CNMI DPH modify the existing land crab public health advisory accordingly.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Copies of sampling reports are available for public review at the CNMI DEQ office. Please feel free to contact either of the people below if you have questions about the sampling or results.

Michelle Rogow
On-Scene Coordinator
U.S. EPA
75 Hawthorne St. (SFD-9-2)
San Francisco, CA 94105
(415) 972-3082 or (800) 231-3075
(leave a message and your call will be returned)
rogow.michelle@epa.gov

John I. Castro, Jr.
Director
CNMI Division of Environmental Quality
(670) 664-8500
deq.director@saipan.com

Dr. James Hofschneider
Secretary
CNMI Department of Public Health
(670) 234-8590
chscs@vzpacifica.net