

AQUANEWS

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Truk Lagoon

By: Paul Galeazzi Jr.

I have been booked to go to Truk Lagoon for two years. I was supposed to make my first trip in September of 2006. Well in August of 2005 I was called by Pablo, of Stingray Divers, and was told that he had an opening for a 2005 trip to Truk. We would stay at the Blue Lagoon Resort on Truk and that we would be roomies. The problem was that we were also booked for DEMA 2005 in Las Vegas the day we were to return from Truk. Needless to say we would have to pack for a dive trip and then for a week in Las Vegas. We had our return flights set up that we would fly directly from Truk to Guam then to Honolulu then to Los Angeles and then finally to Las Vegas. Of course we would be losing many hours on our return, but that is another story.

When we finally arrived in Truk it was on an afternoon after flying in from Honolulu stopping at every island in between. We pulled into the Blue Lagoon Resort at about 3:00 pm their time. We needed to get into our rooms, get lunch and go through orientation all before 5:00. Now that was a tough schedule after flying for many hours. Of course Pablo and I had the forethought to run over to the dive shop to get ourselves set up with double tanks before the following days of diving. Of course this ended up being the best decision that we could have made. After the first day of diving other people on our trip were scrambling to also set up doubles and stage bottles as well as deco bottles. You see there are many wrecks here that you can dive shallow enough not warrant such technical gear. You can even just stay at shallower levels even on the deeper wrecks. The trouble was that a small group of us wanted to do deep penetrations and long dives with long deco stops. To our

surprise the dive shop set our little group up with our own boat with a very experienced dive guide.

I ended up performing 14 dives in 7 day's of diving. Of course we could have done 3 to 4 dives per day and some did. But since we were doing some dives that required an hour and more of deco we felt that we weren't going to push the limits much more. Then again with my back I really don't think that I could have done many more anyway.

Every wreck had something different to see and all had one thing in common, Saki bottles everywhere. I guess those little guy's really liked to drink. Some of the wrecks like the Yamagiri Maru are full of everything that the most magnificent reef would have. I even wrote in my log book that it was the "Best Reef Dive" that I ever did on a wreck. Of course the wreck was also fabulous once you went over the side and towards the deck and then inside hull.

Many of the penetrations were very dangerous but Pablo and I went into areas that no one else in our group would follow. Even Pablo was surprised that someone my size was actually able to maneuver into some of the areas without getting "too" stuck. He kept telling everyone that he was trying to loose me and couldn't, thanks a lot Pablo. On one particular penetration we were deep into the lower bowels of the Shinkoku Maru when Pablo's primary light went dead. Of course this was a real bad time for his backup light to also give out. Well I had my great light that was given to me by fellow Aquanaut Jerry Gherardi which lit up everything in its path. The way

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AQUANEWS

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Truk Lagoon

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that my light lets you know that the battery is going is by blinking. So as you can expect that is exactly what started to happen. Well that means you have about 5 minutes of light left which, would have never got us out the way we came in. I know what you are thinking, just turn on my backup light. Well it seems that the dive guide needed a light and guess who loaned him one, ME. So I got Pablo at my side and we kneeled down on the inside of the wreck. Shutting my light I was able to see some blue water below us and about 50 feet away. So off we went with my blinking light swimming through some unbelievable twisted metal and debris. To our surprise we found a torpedo or bomb hole at the sand level. Well Pablo fit through very nicely but I had to squeeze a little and I had to breathe out all my air. At least I didn't have to dig. I rolled onto my back and I was looking up at the side of the ship. It was one of the most magnificent sites that I have ever seen, especially since we were on the outside of the ship. The swim up seemed forever. I can guarantee you if I ever loan out my secondary light again, that diver better be with me at all times and that is if I ever do it again.

My favorite wreck of the week was the San Francisco Maru. This wreck had everything including 3 Spotted Eagle Rays just swimming around us with such grace. There was also Ammo, China, Bones, Mines, Bottles, etc. It was an everything dive. I also hit my maximum personal depth of 189 feet. With the deco stops it was a 2 hour dive.

For someone that wants to do some unbelievable wreck diving Truk Lagoon is a must. I will be back in 2006 if anyone is interested.

Members of the Rockland Aquanauts Organization Inc.

We need articles for our newsletter! Any help is appreciated.
Contact our webmaster webmaster@rocklandaquanauts.org

Rockland Aquanauts Organization Inc. Mission Statement:

To provide, promote, and advance environmental protection, care, and voluntary clean-up of waterways by any and all lawful means; to promote the importance and care in every manner possible by environmental awareness and otherwise; to purchase, print, publish, and circulate literature to promote the importance and care of the waterways and the work of the Corporation. To perform all acts the Corporation may deem appropriate or advisable in such operation; to establish, provide, and voluntary clean-up waterways, to encourage, support and subsidize the cleaning and protection from pollution.

Army admits extensive chemical weapons dumping
By John M.R. Bull
Daily Press (Newport News, Va.)

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. In the summer of 2004, a clam-dredging operation off New Jersey pulled up an old artillery shell. The long-submerged World War I-era explosive was filled with a black tar-like substance. Bomb disposal technicians from Dover Air Force Base, Del., were brought in to dismantle it. Three of them were injured, one hospitalized with large pus-filled blisters on an arm and hand. The shell was filled with mustard gas in solid form.

What was long feared by the few military officials in the know had come to pass: Chemical weapons that the Army dumped at sea decades ago finally ended up on shore in the United States. It's long been known that some chemical weapons went into the ocean, but records obtained by the Daily Press show that the previously classified weapons-dumping program was far more extensive than ever suspected.

The Army now admits that it secretly dumped 64 million pounds of nerve and mustard agents into the sea, along with 400,000 chemical-filled bombs, land mines and rockets and more than 500 tons of radioactive waste, either tossed overboard or packed into the holds of scuttled vessels.

A Daily Press investigation also found: These weapons of mass destruction virtually ring the country, concealed off at least 11 states, six on the East Coast, two on the Gulf Coast, California, Hawaii and Alaska. Few, if any, state officials have been informed of their existence.

The chemical agents could pose a hazard for generations. The Army has examined only a few of its 26 dump zones and none in the past 30 years.

The Army can't say exactly where all the weapons were dumped from World War II to 1970. Army records are sketchy, missing or were destroyed.

More dumpsites likely exist. The Army hasn't reviewed World War I-era records, when ocean dumping of chemical weapons was common.

"We do not claim to know where they all are," said William Brankowitz, a deputy project manager in the Army Chemical Materials Agency and a leading authority on the Army's chemical weapons dumping.

"We don't want to be cavalier at all and say this stuff was exposed to water and is OK. It can last for a very, very long time."

A drop of nerve agent can kill within a minute. When released in the ocean, it lasts up to six weeks, killing every organism it touches before breaking down into its non-lethal chemical components. Mustard gas can be fatal. When exposed to seawater, it forms a concentrated, encrusted gel that lasts for at least five years, rolling around on the ocean floor, killing or contaminating sea life.

Sea-dumped chemical weapons might be slowly leaking from decades of saltwater corrosion, resulting in a time-delayed release of deadly chemicals over the next 100 years and an unforeseeable environmental effect. Steel corrodes at different rates, depending on the water depth, ocean temperature and thickness of the shells.

That was the conclusion of Norwegian scientists who in 2002 examined chemical weapons dumped off Norway after World War II by the U.S. and British militaries. Overseas, more than 200 fishermen over the years have been burned by mustard gas pulled on deck. A fisherman in Hawai'i was burned in 1976, when he brought up an Army-dumped mortar round full of mustard gas.

It seems unlikely that the weapons will begin to wash up on shore, but last year's discovery that a mustard-gas-filled artillery shell was dumped off New Jersey was ominous for several reasons. It was the first ocean-dumped chemical weapon to somehow make its way to U.S. shores. It was pulled up with clams in relatively shallow water only 20 miles off Atlantic City. The Army had no idea that chemical weapons were dumped in the area.

Most alarming: It was found intact in a residential driveway in Delaware.

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Army admits extensive chemical weapons dumping

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It had survived, intact, after being dredged up and put through a crusher to create cheap clamshell driveway fill sold throughout the Delmarva Peninsula.

The Army's secret ocean-dumping program spanned decades, from 1944 to 1970. The dumped weapons were deemed to be unneeded surplus. They were hazardous to transport, expensive to store, too dangerous to bury and difficult to destroy. In the early 1970s, the Army publicly admitted it dumped some chemical weapons off the U.S. coast. Congress banned the practice in 1972. Three years later, the United States signed an international treaty prohibiting ocean disposal of chemical weapons.

Only now have Army reports come to light that show how much was dumped, what kind of chemical weapons they were, when they were thrown overboard and rough nautical coordinates of where some are. The reports contain bits and pieces of information on the Army's long-running dumping program. The reports were released to the Daily Press' which cross-indexed them to obtain the most comprehensive, detailed picture yet of what was dumped, where and when.

To put the information in context, the newspaper also examined nautical charts, National Archive records, scientific studies and interviewed dozens of experts on unexploded ordnance and chemical warfare in the United States and overseas.

The environmental effect of chemical weapons dumpsites is unknown but potentially disastrous. Ocean depth varies widely off the East Coast. As a rule, it gradually deepens to 600 feet before hitting the outer continental shelf, which drops into very deep water. The shelf's location can be as close as 60 miles, or as far as 200 miles, from shore.

"The perception at the time was the ocean is vast ? it would absorb it," said Craig Williams, director of the Chemical Weapons Working Group in Kentucky, a grass-roots citizens group. "Certainly, it is insane in retrospect they would do it." "It would be inevitable, I assume, all of this will be released into the ocean at some point or another," said Williams, who has fought Army plans to incinerate some of the 44 million pounds of chemical weapons the country still has stockpiled. "I don't think anyone knows for sure the true danger. It's just a matter of opinion. You can say, 'It's going to kill everyone,' or you can say, 'It's not a problem.' The truth is somewhere in between."

Based on the information available, the Army presumes that most of the weapons are in very deep water and are unlikely to jeopardize divers or commercial fishing operations that dredge the ocean bottom.

John Chatterton doesn't believe that. "I don't think it all is where they say it is," said Chatterton, a 25-year veteran diver who searches for undiscovered shipwrecks as host of The History Channel's "Deep Sea Detectives." "I've found a lot of stuff where it's not supposed to be. Absolutely, positively, it is not a guarantee it is there [in deep water]."

One of the first of the now-identified dump zones created at the end of World War II was also one of the largest. The Army dubbed it Disposal Site Baker. The Army has only the vaguest idea where it is on the ocean floor, somewhere off the coast of Charleston, S.C., the most specific surviving records indicate. "I have never had any information to suggest this was done," said Charles Farmer, a marine biologist who's worked for South Carolina's Department of Natural Resources for almost 40 years. "I would say this is not well known to us at all. This is something that is new, at least to me. It's incredible some of the things we've managed to do."

The first documented dump near that state was in March 1946, when four railroad cars full of mustard gas bombs and mines were tossed over the side of the USS Diamond Head, an ammunition ship. Several months later, an estimated 23 barges full of German-produced nerve gas bombs and U.S.-made Lewisite bombs were dumped in the same location. Lewisite is a blister agent akin to mustard gas. A single barge carried up to 350 tons.

"If we don't have any idea of depths of water or location, hell, they could be anywhere," Farmer said. "As we have more and more activity and more and more development off the coast, I hope this was buried in 6,000 feet of water ... or a lot of this stuff is going to come back to haunt us." There's one indication that those weapons were dumped in relatively shallow water: Army records show many of those 23 slow-moving barges were unloaded in one-day, out-and-back operations.

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The records leave no doubt that other chemical weapons were dumped close to shore: In 1944, at least 16,000 mustard-filled 100-pound bombs were unloaded off Hawai'i in deep water only five miles from shore. Several mustard gas bombs fell into the Mississippi River near Braithwaite, La., in 1945 and have never been found. A reported 124 leaking German mustard gas bombs were tossed in the Gulf of Mexico off Horn Island in Mississippi in 1946 from a barge that returned to port a few hours later. The island is now part of Gulf Islands National Seashore, a popular vacation and fishing destination. A 1947 dumpsite in Alaska's Aleutian Islands is only 12 miles from a harbor.

The effect of the dumping operations has never been studied. Few scientists knew that it was done, so studies of the decline in sea life over the years has never focused on the possibility of leaking chemical weapons. "It'd be nice to see the Army go down there and investigate, but nobody wants to open that book, it seems," Schoelkopf said. "You'd think they'd want to go look at those sites and say once and for all this isn't a problem. The amazing thing is they are not being monitored."

The Army also wondered whether its chemical weapons were responsible for the dolphin deaths and was preparing to investigate some dump zones. The project was scrapped when the deaths were attributed to the virus and bacteria, the Army's Brankowitz said.

The Army is obliged to at least assess the danger that the dumpsites pose today, said Lenny Siegel, director of the Center for Public Environmental Oversight who specializes in chemical weapons issues. "If no one does a study looking for three-legged fish, how do they know it's not a problem?" he wondered. "My guess is the risks are remote in most cases, but I think you have to at least evaluate the risk. They have to take continuing responsibility.

"They need to see if there is an impact on the food chain. If there is, you have to warn people. If so, they have to do something with them."

'INTERSEX' FISH FOUND OFF CALIF. COAST

By The Associated Press
The New York Times, Nov. 14, 2005

LOS ANGELES (AP) -- Scientists have discovered sexually altered fish off the Southern California coast, raising concerns that treated sewage discharged into the ocean contains chemicals that can affect an animal's reproductive system.

So-called intersex animals are not new, but most previous instances were in freshwater. Environmentalists say this is among the first studies to document the effects in a marine environment.

Last year, federal scientists reported finding egg-growing male fish in Maryland's Potomac River. They think the abnormality may be caused by pollutants from sewage plants, feedlots and factories.

In the latest studies, presented at Monday's Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry in Baltimore, scientists caught 82 male English sole and hornyhead turbot off Los Angeles and Orange counties.

Of those, 11 possessed ovary tissue in their testes, said Doris Vidal of the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project, who led one of the studies.

Scientists do not yet know how such sexual defects affect the overall fish population.

Nearly a billion gallons of treated sewage are released into the Pacific Ocean every day through three underwater pipelines off Huntington Beach, Playa del Rey and Palos Verdes Peninsula.

Although the wastewater is filtered, it still contains contaminants that settle onto the ocean floor.

Two related studies found that two-thirds of male fish near the Orange County pipeline had egg-producing qualities. In a laboratory experiment, male fish exposed to sediment collected from the pipelines also developed egg-producing traits.

Steve Weisberg, who heads the water research project, said the results warrant further study to determine whether sexually altered fish are widespread in ocean waters.

The last comment on this article is how, sometimes, things get misunderstood in newspapers. Lots of the money that this study is spending, could be used to treat some of the 'stuff' they are going to track. After all, I don't want 'them' to just dump further out in the ocean and I am sure that is what COA meant also....

Some of us OLD divers remember when they just moved the sewerage dumpsite further offshore - it was the same sh_t, just in a different (clean) place AND it spread in ways 'government some scientists' didn't expect!

Remember that COA looks at these (in addition to the artificial reef stuff): As a result of years of ocean dumping, a legacy of pollution remains in the ocean off the NY/NJ coast. The continuous and current sources of contamination and threats to ocean water quality include **contaminated sediments, wastewater discharge in the ocean, strip-mining, offshore energy development (i.e., oil & gas drilling and exploration), and stormwater runoff and nonpoint source pollution.** (from www.cleanoceanaction.org)

Remember when OUR ocean had a: Toxic Waste Incineration site

Industrial Waste Site

Woodburning Site

Acid Waste Site

and more.

Study to turn seas red

Published in the Asbury Park Press 04/8/05

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

GOAL: To determine how pollution spreads from Hudson

METHOD: Scientists will release dye at river's mouth

TRENTON — Researchers led by scientists from Rutgers University are to release nontoxic red dye into the mouth of the Hudson River today to see how pollutants and other material discharged from the river interact with the Atlantic Ocean.

The five-year, \$4.2 million project has already brought some surprises in its second year. While following dye about 20 miles from Sandy Hook to Manasquan last May, the scientists expected to see concentrations of heavy metals dissipate in the phytoplankton near the bottom of the food chain.

But the concentrations stayed the same, suggesting that pollution from the Hudson River was entering the food chain miles out.

"We were kind of surprised that the contaminant load remained the same," said Robert Chant, professor of marine science at Rutgers' Institute of Marine and Coastal Sciences.

Chant said the researchers plan to release twice as much dye this time. They are also heading out earlier in the year in the hope of catching the Hudson River's discharge when the current is stronger.

"The problem is there's a lot of variability in the ocean," Chant said.

Two ships and 25 scientists from Rutgers, Columbia University and the University of Massachusetts-Boston will follow two dye releases over two weeks. The project, funded by the National Science Foundation, is using an underwater glider plus satellite and radar monitoring to assemble an overall picture of the Hudson River's discharge. "In the old days, you went out on a boat, and you didn't have any contact with satellites," Chant said.

Results from the study might help discern whether New York should dispose of treated sewage farther out in the ocean, he said.

Environmental advocacy group Clean Ocean Action has been critical of the government spending millions to study the Hudson River's outflow.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEES ARE DUE

Rockland Aquanauts Organization 2006 Dues

I guess it is that time of the year again, Membership Dues are due. Last year all our members received much more than they gave out to the Organization.

As usual you will be receiving a tax donation for the first \$25.00. All members who attended the Annual Dinner not only received money off their own dinner but they also received money off their guests dinner. Everyone whom attended also received prizes, some worth many times the cost of their Dues. Don't forget the Annual Picnic as well as all the BBQ lunch's after the Lake Dives.

So please send in your dues early to;

Rockland Aquanauts Organization
c/o
Paul Galeazzi Jr.



**Rockland Aquanauts
Post Office Box 387
New City, NY
10956**

December 2005

Truk Lagoon, 2006 Dues, "Intersex" Fish Found, Pollution in the Hudson, Army admits chemical dumping

Happy Holidays!

Happy New Year! Have a happy and safe 2006