



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: August 12, 2004

Contact: Carl Schneebeck, 415-544-0790, ext. 16

Sean Smith, 415-544-0790, ext. 19

Tests Reveal Pollution at Benicia Jetski Races

Discharge of toxins found for second year in a row

San Francisco, CA – Tests conducted by Bluewater Network at the jetski races held at the Benicia Waterfront Festival July 30 through August 1 showed an alarming discharge of toxic pollution into the waters of the Carquinez Strait for the second year in a row. Benzene, a known carcinogen was detected at levels twice the minimum of state drinking water standards, and methyl-tertiary butyl ether (MTBE) was detected at nearly three times the minimum of state standards. Bluewater conducted the tests last year with similar results.

The Carquinez Strait is not a drinking water source; in fact it receives heavy use from cargo ships and is surrounded by industrial facilities including a refinery. Despite these potential sources of pollution, levels of benzene and MTBE were not detectable prior to the jetski races. Levels of benzene rose to 2 micrograms per liter ($\mu\text{g/L}$) after only three hours of racing. The maximum contaminant level for benzene in California drinking water is 1 $\mu\text{g/L}$. Levels of MTBE were found at 34.9 $\mu\text{g/L}$ during the races. The maximum contaminant level for MTBE is 13 $\mu\text{g/L}$. Some pollutants may have continued to increase as the races continued for another day and a half after the samples were taken.

“These results are disturbing for any waterway and certainly raise concerns about holding these types of events on drinking water sources,” said Carl Schneebeck of Bluewater Network, who collected the samples at the race. “At the very least, the tests show that a high concentration of jetski use has an impact on our waterways and needs to be addressed by the Coast Guard.”

In June, Bluewater sent a letter to the Coast Guard requesting that environmental assessments take place before granting permits for jetski races. Recently, Bluewater received the Coast Guard’s response stating that they plan to “vigorously investigate” the issues that were raised in the June letter. A request to the Coast Guard for a copy of the permit for the Benicia jetski races has so far gone unfulfilled.

California no longer permits the sale of highly-polluting conventional two-stroke jetskis, but these machines continue to be used on state waterways.

“At the very least, these races should be setting an example for other jetski riders by only allowing four-stroke or direct-injected two-stroke models to race,” said Schneebeck. “Everyone has the right to have fun, but not at the expense of the natural resources we all share.”

###

Bluewater Network is a national environmental organization dedicated to reducing dependence on fossil fuels & eradicating other root causes of air and water pollution, global warming, & habitat destruction. More than 20,000 members in all 50 states and four nations have already joined.

Bluewater Network ~ 311 California, Suite 510 ~ San Francisco, CA 94104

www.bluewaternet.org ~ bluewater@bluewaternet.org

T: 415.544-0790, F: 415.544.0796