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Site Monitoring Project

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Description Notes

JOHNSTON ISLAND HERBICIDE ORANGE
STORAGE SITE MONITORING PROJECT

USAF OEHL/EC
BROOKS AFB TX
JANUARY 1978

CONCEPT

The soil of the 1.5 hectare storage site (used for the storage of Herbicide Orange from Apr 1971 - Sep 1977) consists of highly compacted coral dredged from a surrounding lagoon. Although the coral is relatively homogeneous, the contamination by Herbicide Orange is heterogeneous: dates of spills or the amounts of herbicide or areas involved were not recorded. Thus, the expected variability in herbicides and TCDD concentration throughout the storage site dictated that the monitoring program: (a) provide inferences as to the range of residue levels in the coral for any point on the site; (b) be sufficiently replicated to be statistically valid; (c) be continued over a sufficiently long period of time so that trends in residue degradation are evidenced; and (d) be accomplished within USAF budgetary limitations. In addition, the "ideal" monitoring program should have some method of determining a minimum level of residue that can be considered as biologically and ecologically acceptable, i.e., a "no" significant effect residue level.

SITE SELECTION

Previous analyses of coral samples collected (24 Aug 1974 and 25 Aug 1977) at sites within the inventory area where herbicide spills had occurred indicated that 98% of all herbicides and TCDD residues were found within the top 8cm of soil profile. Thus, the soil monitoring program was confined to a single depth (0-8cm). The sites selected within the storage area for monitoring of residue were determined by whether a spill had occurred or not occurred at that specific location. The basis for determining a spill was whether a herbicide stain was discernible (heavy, light, absent) and whether a herbicide odor was detectable (strong, mild, absent). Thus, within the storage area numerous locations were found that had a heavy stain and strong odor (labeled H/H, presumably representing a recent spill); a light stain and mild odor (labeled L/L, presumably representing an older spill); and no stain and no odor (labeled O/O, presumably representing an uncontaminated area). Fourteen replications of each treatment were then randomly selected to represent the storage area (thus, a total of 42 permanently marked sampling locations). Twelve of these locations (four of each of the treatments) were located and marked on 25 Aug 1977 with the remaining 30 located and marked on 8 Jan 1978. [The first complete set of soil samples were collected 9 Jan 1978.]

CHEMICAL ANALYSES

Soil samples will be collected and placed into new glass jars (400ml) appropriately labeled and transported to the laboratory where they will be uniformly mixed and subsampled. One subsample will be used for chemical analysis and will be immediately frozen. The remaining sample will be used for microbial studies (see microbial analyses). Each soil sample will be analyzed for the esters and acids of 2, 4-dichlorophenoxyacetic acid (2, 4-D) and 2, 4, 5-trichlorophenoxyacetic acid (2, 4, 5-T). In addition, each sample will be analyzed for di and trichlorophenols (immediate degradation products of 2, 4-D and 2, 4, 5-T) and TCDD (2, 3, 7, 8-tetrachlorodibenzo-p-dioxin).

MICROBIAL ANALYSES

To determine an ecologically acceptable "no effect" residue level, all samples will be analyzed for total populations of actinomycetes, fungi and bacteria. In addition, key species responding to the presence of herbicides, phenols, or TCDD residues will be monitored. Quantitative and qualitative studies of the microorganisms from each of the treatment classes used in association with residue data should permit an establishment of a no effect level.