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**A Toxic Legacy Bubbling Below: Webinar to Convene Scientists
from Across California to Discuss DDT's Deadly Effects**

Moderated by Los Angeles Times Environment Reporter Rosanna Xia, the special webinar will feature leading chemical and ocean experts to discuss the effects of this disaster on our ocean and marine mammals, and what the future looks like for clean-up and accountability.

Sausalito, Calif. (June 2, 2021) – The Marine Mammal Center – the world's largest marine mammal hospital – has announced a special webinar in its Ocean Policy Webinar Series focusing on the DDT pollution discovered off the coast of Los Angeles. The webinar will feature scientists from both UC Santa Barbara's Department of Earth Science and Marine Science Institute and UC San Diego's Scripps Institution of Oceanography, who discovered the DDT barrels and recently mapped a portion of the dumpsite. They'll be joined by the director of pathology from the Center who has been at the forefront of cancer research in California sea lions, linked to pollutants including DDT. It will take place on June 10 at 10 AM PDT. Pre-registration is required, and details can be found at www.marinemammalcenter.org/policy/.

The webinar is titled: **A Toxic Legacy: DDT Dumping in the Ocean**. In October 2020, the Los Angeles Times reported about the discovery of DDT barrels that were dumped decades ago off the coast of southern California. Since then, and with each new report, the concerns grew, from deadly cancers in marine mammals to the discovery that the dumpsite might be larger than anyone expected – larger than the city of San Francisco.

The special webinar will be moderated by **L.A. Times Environment Reporter Rosanna Xia**. A Pulitzer Prize finalist in 2020, Xia has spent the past year uncovering the disastrous story of the DDT dumping off the coast of Los Angeles. Her initial [reporting](#) on the DDT dumping raised national awareness on one of today's biggest environmental controversies.

“The toxic DDT dumping is one of the most egregious cases of environmental destruction our ocean has ever seen, and the effects of this decades-old crime on the environment, animals and even humans are still being discovered and yet to be fully understood,” said Dr. Jeff Boehm, CEO of The Marine Mammal Center. “This discussion will be important for our understanding of just how big this environmental disaster is, how far its deadly effects reach, and what can be done to restore health in the ocean.”

The first panelist is **Dr. David Valentine**, a professor of Geochemistry and Microbiology at UC Santa Barbara, where he holds the Norris Presidential Endowed Chair. He has published more than 150 articles, books, and patents, and is an elected Fellow of both the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the American Academy of Microbiology. In 2011 and 2013, Dr. Valentine and his team of scientists first identified barrels and collected samples of DDT-laden sediment, and their 2019 publication reignited the conversation on this decades-old dumping site.

Joining the webinar from UC San Diego's Scripps Institution of Oceanography is **Dr. Eric Terrill**. Dr. Terrill, an oceanographer with 25 years of experience, is the director of the Marine Physical Laboratory at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, and specializes in developing technology for exploratory and expeditionary research. Dr. Terrill served as chief scientist on the seafloor mapping expedition to map a portion of the dumpsite that led to the finding of 27,000 barrel-like objects in the debris field.

Also joining from Scripps Institution of Oceanography is **Dr. Lihini Aluwihare**. Dr. Aluwihare is a chemical oceanographer and a professor of geosciences who has been studying the chemistry and microbial ecology of the California Current Ecosystem for 20 years. She develops analytical tools to unravel the complex chemical signatures in natural waters, including the human fingerprint of manmade organic compounds in seawater. In 2015, Dr. Aluwihare co-authored a study reporting high levels of DDT and other man-made chemicals in the blubber of bottlenose dolphins that died of natural causes.

Rounding out the panel is **Dr. Pádraig Duignan**, Director of Pathology at The Marine Mammal Center. His three-plus decades of experience in marine mammal diagnostics and research in the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, United Kingdom and Ireland place him as one of the top research pathologists in his field of study with over 130 scientific publications. Dr. Duignan's research mainly focuses on diseases that impact marine mammals of the West Coast. Dr. Duignan and a team of scientists from The Marine Mammal Center found that cancer rates among adult California sea lions is significantly increased by their exposure to toxins in the environment, including DDT. The 2020 study, a result of over 20 years of research, highlighted how the exposure to environmental contaminants can fast-track the likelihood of California sea lions developing virally-caused cancers, an alarming implication for human health.

ABOUT THE MARINE MAMMAL CENTER:

Headquartered on the site of a former Cold War missile base, The Marine Mammal Center is a global leader in marine mammal health, science and conservation, and is the largest marine mammal hospital in the world. The Center's teaching hospital and training programs operate globally, with its headquarters in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, part of the National Park Service. Expert teams from the Center travel around the world to work with emerging first responders and has itself rescued more than 24,000 marine mammals from 600 miles of its authorized rescue area of California coastline and the Big Island of Hawai'i. The Center's mission is to advance global ocean conservation through marine mammal rescue and rehabilitation, scientific research, and education.

For more information, please visit MarineMammalCenter.org. Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).

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