

## Rep. Ellen Tauscher Seeks Answers on Suisun Bay Fleet

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Rep. Ellen Tauscher Seeks Answers on Suisun Bay Fleet

Joins Rep. Miller & Sens. Feinstein and Boxer in requesting further explanation of possible environmental hazard

WASHINGTON -- Responding to reports that the Suisun Bay Reserve Fleet may be affecting the environmental health of the San Francisco Bay , four California lawmakers are pressuring the Bush Administration for a plan to ensure that the ships are not releasing toxic materials into the Bay.

In a letter today to the federal Maritime Administration, which maintains the fleet and is responsible for its cleanup, Rep. Ellen Tauscher (D-Alamo), Rep. George Miller (D-Martinez), and U.S. Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein asked for a briefing on the current state of the long-mothballed navy fleet and for an update on specific steps the Administration is taking.

“The beauty and the utility of the bay are two of our regions greatest resources,” said Rep. Tauscher. “Because of this we need to be vigilant and take every step toward protecting it from present and future environmental hazards. The fact that they have been sitting on this report for month is infuriating. Bay Area citizens have the right to know the environmental impact of the mothball fleet which is why we are putting pressure on the Bush administration to let us know what, if any, plans they have to protect our Bay.”

It was recently reported that the Administration received a report in February on possible environmental damage from the fleet but it is unclear what action if any the Administration has taken in response to its own report.

“We recognize that this is a complicated situation but inaction is not a solution,” said Miller. “We intend to keep the pressure on the Administration to develop a plan that protects the environment and allows for these ships to be disposed of properly.”

The full text of the letter is below.

June 22, 2007

The Honorable Sean Connaughton, Maritime Administrator

Maritime Administration

U.S. Department of Transportation

1200 New Jersey Avenue SE

Washington , D.C. 20590

Dear Administrator Connaughton:

We have recently learned of a report commissioned by the United States Maritime Administration to analyze the degree to which paint on the ships of the Suisun Bay Reserve Fleet has flaked off and settled into the sediment under the fleet. We are concerned both that your agency has had this report in its possession since February 2007 and that the findings of the report contain evidence of a growing environmental hazard to the San Francisco Bay's fragile ecosystem. We are writing to inquire how your agency intends to address the situation.

In order to better understand the present situation, we would like a full briefing on the contents of the report and a description of what further studies, if any, need to be taken to better understand the environmental impact of the Suisun fleet. It is our understanding that the report suggests that toxic concentrations near the fleet should not be interpreted to mean that the fleet is a point source for toxic metals in the Bay. To clarify the situation, please provide a detailed explanation of the Maritime Administration's assessment of the findings of the report. In addition, please explain to us how your agency has acted on the report since its completion in February.

So that we can ensure appropriate protections are in place for California's natural resources, please provide us with the Maritime Administration's plan to ensure that ships maintained at Suisun Bay are not releasing toxic materials into the Bay. If there are legislative or other resources necessary to ensure the vessels do not continue to pollute the Bay in the future, please include that information. We would also appreciate an update on the number of ships at the Suisun Bay facility that are ready to be dismantled.

Finally, we ask that your agency promptly consult with the Coast Guard and the San Francisco Regional Water Quality Control Board and provide us with a plan for the continued disposal of the ships that meets all federal and state environmental standards.

We stand ready to work with you to help develop and implement a responsible solution to resolve this matter. We would appreciate your reply by July 9 of this year so that we can quickly assess whether further action may be required.

Sincerely,

Senator Dianne Feinstein

Senator Barbara Boxer

Rep. Ellen O. Tauscher

Rep. George Miller

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