

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

November 1, 2013

Butte Environmental Council

[www.becnet.org/dioxin-butte-county](http://www.becnet.org/dioxin-butte-county)

**BUTTE ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL, OROVILLE COMMUNITY GROUP LAUNCH  
DIOXIN AWARENESS CAMPAIGN**

Oroville, CA— Many Oroville residents aren't even aware of the legacy of dioxin contamination in their area. **"I didn't even know about this issue until two months ago, and I've lived in this community for 30 years,"** says Marlene Del Rosario, an Oroville resident. This issue is a timely one, as Oroville looks to implement greening and sustainability measures. BEC feels strongly that these efforts should include an analysis of current dioxin levels in areas of known contamination, and is working with community groups to educate residents on the issue. The billboards going up around Oroville this week are the first part of an education and outreach campaign to inform area residence of the toxicity of dioxin, and its continued presence in areas of South Oroville.

**WHO:** Funded by two small Patagonia and Clif Foundation grants, the **Butte Environmental Council** offered a series of Public Forums to the Oroville community about dioxin contamination in Oroville. The community responded that more education and outreach on the issue was needed. So, local BEC members and staff joined with others in the community to form the **Oroville Dioxin Education Committee (ODEC)**, with the stated goal to **"educate and prepare community members, to raise awareness, and to lead the effort to safeguard our community against dioxin."**

**WHERE/HOW:** Dioxin in Oroville became a major concern in 1987 with the Koppers fire—the second major fire on the site, with the 1963 fire being the first. Burning chemicals from the wood treatment facility resulted in a large release of dioxin into the air and onto the surrounding soil. More recently, the Covanta-owned Pacific Oroville Power, Inc. biomass incinerator was found to have released significant amounts of dioxin via waste ash piles in Butte and neighboring counties. Now closed for over a year, the company is currently negotiating an out-of-court settlement for dioxin and heavy metals contamination in several counties. The action is being led by Butte County's District Attorney.

**WHAT:** Dioxin is created by incineration, including backyard burning. There are over 250 different forms of dioxin; what we call "dioxin" is usually a weighted measurement of the 17 most toxic forms. This weighted measurement is called a "Toxic Equivalency Quotient," or TEQ. It allows us to use one number to describe all seventeen measurements. Government regulations set different "safe" levels of dioxins in food and soil, but many scientists who study the issue in depth say there is no "safe" level of dioxin. BEC and community members are calling for a clean-up of the dioxin in Oroville.

#

**WHY:** Dioxin bonds to protein receptors in the body and can disrupt immune, reproductive, and endocrine systems. Because it is an endocrine disruptor, damage at the cellular level from dioxin can be passed down from generation to generation. Dioxin also has been linked to diabetes, endometriosis, liver cancer, and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Dioxin levels in some (mostly unincorporated) Oroville locations have been alarmingly high, which disproportionately affects residents' health in these rural areas. "We need to remember that environmental harms are not distributed equally and that some people and places bear more of an impact than others," said Mark Stemen, Board President. " We in the Butte Environmental Council believe it is our duty to protect and advocate for the land, air and water in ALL of Butte County."

It is very important to know about dioxin contamination in your area, and to know how to reduce your exposure to dioxin through diet and other best practices. The Butte Environmental Council has additional information available on our website ([www.becnet.org](http://www.becnet.org)), and we will be coordinating with Environmental Health to make information available on the Butte County website.

BEC is calling for a clean-up of dioxin in the affected area. The fact that citizens are getting involved shows that Oroville residents are concerned about dioxin in their community, and BEC is eager to work with agencies and community groups to secure funding for testing and remediation. **"I am so grateful that the dioxin work BEC has been doing since 2010 is now being joined in earnest by Oroville community members,"** says Julia Murphy, BEC project coordinator.

The time is now to address this past and present hazard, to ensure Oroville's healthy future. Please contact [juliam@becnet.org](mailto:juliam@becnet.org) or call BEC at **891-6424** for more information, to request outreach, or to get involved with this community effort. Robyn DiFalco, BEC Director, says **"We urge citizens to get involved, and call on elected leaders to work with us to secure funding, to finally clean up the dioxin in Oroville."**

####