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Radioactive Fish in the USA?

FDA Refuses to Test Fish for Radioactivity ... Government Pretends Radioactive Fish Is Safe

By Washington's Blog
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The FDA says it won't monitor radiation in fish on the West Coast of the U.S. As the Anchorage Daily News notes:

> North Pacific fish are so unlikely to be contaminated by radioactive material from the crippled nuclear plant in Japan that there's no reason to test them, state and federal officials said this week.
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> DeLancey, the FDA spokeswoman, said "We have not been doing any testing. We've been working with NOAA to keep an eye on U.S. waters, to see if there is any cause for alarm, and we do have the capability to begin testing if that does occur."
>
> Asked to explain what kind of monitoring was taking place in the ocean, DeLancey said, "You would have to talk directly to NOAA ... I don't really want to speak for another agency."
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> But NOAA fisheries spokeswoman Kate Naughton declined to answer questions and referred a reporter back to DeLancey and the EPA.
>
> DeLancey said that so far, there's no reason for concern about Fukushima. The radioactive materials in the water near Fukushima quickly become diluted in the massive volume of the Pacific, she said. Additionally, radioactive fallout that lands on the surface tends to stay there, giving the most unstable ones isotopes like iodine time to decay before reaching fish, she said.

Of course, radioactive isotopes like cesium 137 are very long-lived, and so won't necessarily decay before they reach fish.

And – in typical Orwellian agency-speak – the FDA is trying to reassure people that eating contaminated fish poses no health risk. As the Wall Street Journal notes:

> U.S. public-health officials sought Tuesday to reassure consumers about the safety of food in the U.S., including seafood, amid news that fish contaminated with unusually high levels of radioactive materials had been caught in waters 50 miles from the stricken Fukushima nuclear plant in Japan.
>
> No contaminated fish have turned up in the U.S., or in U.S. waters, according to experts from the Food and Drug Administration [which isn't testing],

> Environmental Protection Agency and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. They expressed confidence that even a single fish sufficiently contaminated to pose a risk to human health would be detected by the U.S. monitoring system. [But would the government announce such detection?]
>
> They also dismissed concerns that eating fish contaminated at the levels seen so far in Japan would pose such a risk. [Alexander Higgins points out that Japanese fish exceed federal radiation limits by 2400%]
>
> Thomas Frieden, head of the CDC in Atlanta, said he expected continued detection of low levels of radioactive elements in the water, air and food in the U.S. in coming days, but that readings at those levels "do not indicate any level of public health concern."

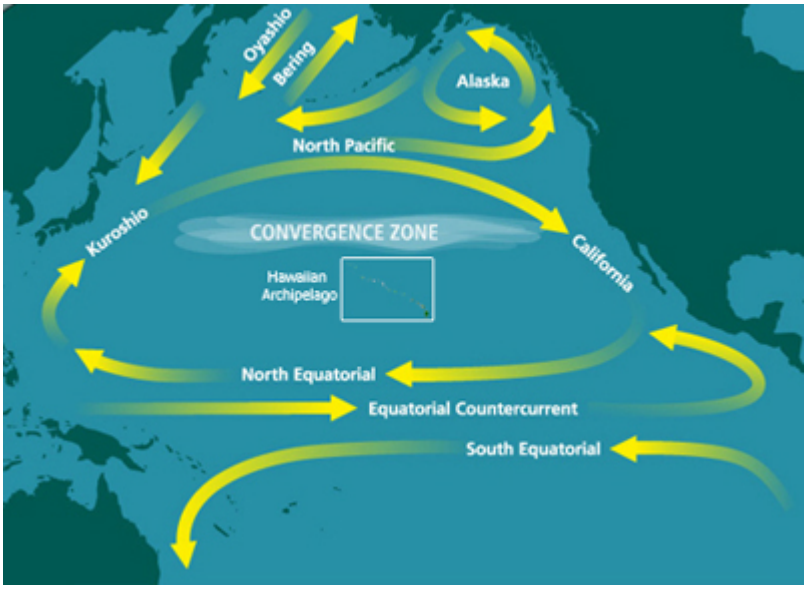
Is this yet another example of the government responding to the nuclear accident by trying to raise acceptable radiation levels and pretending that radiation is good for us?

Indeed, the ocean currents head from Japan to the West Coast of the U.S.

As AP notes:

> The floating debris will likely be carried by currents off of Japan toward Washington, Oregon and California before turning toward Hawaii and back again toward Asia, circulating in what is known as the North Pacific gyre, said Curt Ebbesmeyer, a Seattle oceanographer who has spent decades tracking flotsam.
>
> ***
> "All this debris will find a way to reach the West coast or stop in the Great Pacific Garbage Patch," a swirling mass of concentrated marine litter in the Pacific Ocean, said Luca Centurioni, a researcher at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, UC San Diego.

Here is what the North Pacific Gyre looks like:

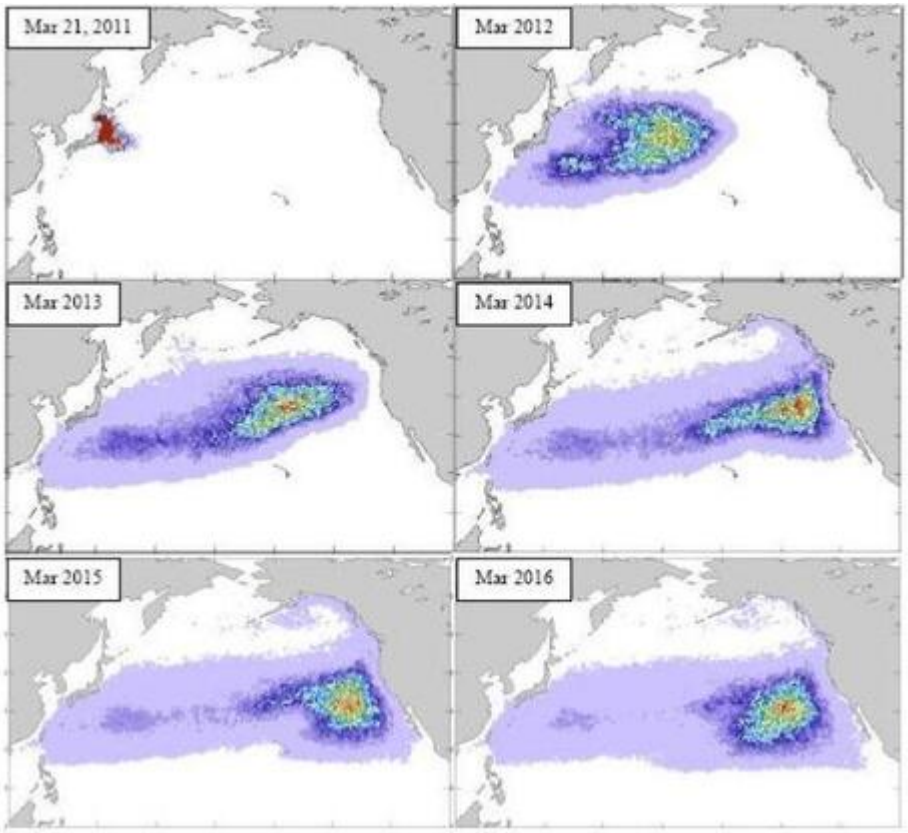


NPR reports:

CNN said that “the Hawaiian islands may get a new and unwelcome addition in coming months — a giant new island of debris floating in from Japan.” It relied in part on work done by the University of Hawaii’s International Pacific Research Center, which predicts that:

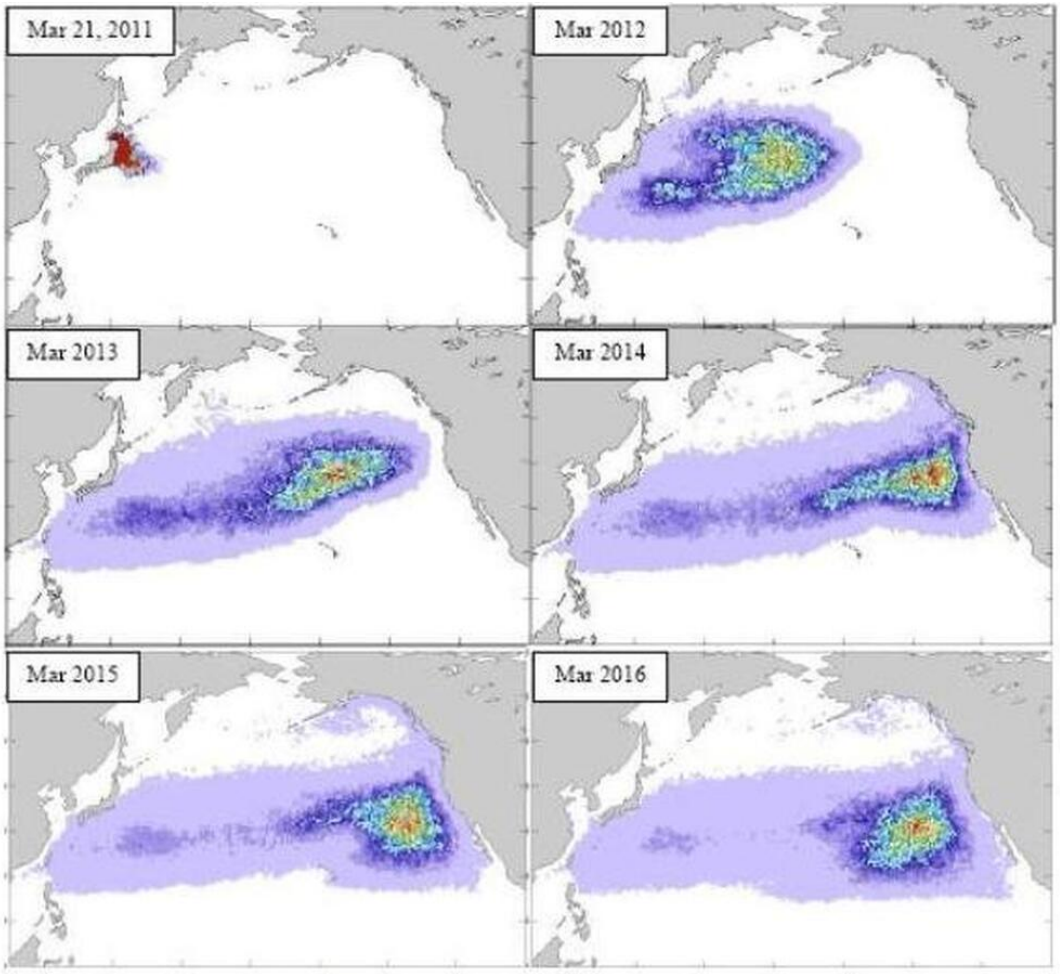
> “In three years, the [debris] plume will reach the U.S. West Coast, dumping debris on Californian beaches and the beaches of British Columbia, Alaska, and Baja California. The debris will then drift into the famous North Pacific Garbage Patch, where it will wander around and break into smaller and smaller pieces. In five years, Hawaii shores can expect to see another barrage of debris that is stronger and longer lastingthan the first one. Much of the debris leaving the North Pacific Garbage Patch ends up on Hawaii’s reefs and beaches.”

The research center has an animated graphic showing the debris field’s likely route posted online here. And it has images of how the debris field will circulate, from this month (in upper left corner) to March 2016 (lower right).



Enlarge University of Hawaii’s International Pacific Research Center

The projected path of the debris field, from March of this year (in upper left), through March 2016 (lower right). That’s the Pacific Ocean, with Japan to the left and the west coast of the U.S. to the right. Hawaii is the small chain of islands in the center.



University of Hawaii's International Pacific Research Center

> The projected path of the debris field, from March of this year (in upper left), through March 2016 (lower right). That's the Pacific Ocean, with Japan to the left and the west coast of the U.S. to the right. Hawaii is the small chain of islands in the center.

Indeed, CNN notes:

> The debris mass, which appears as an island from the air, contains cars, trucks, tractors, boats and entire houses floating in the current heading toward the U.S. and Canada, according to ABC News.

The bulk of the debris will likely not be radioactive, as it was presumably washed out to sea during the initial tsunami – before much radioactivity had leaked. But this shows the power of the currents from Japan to the West Coast.

Nuclear engineer Arnie Gundersen doesn't think there will be a risk within the next year. But as the plume spreads across the Pacific, and as small fish get eaten by bigger fish (i.e. bioaccumulation), it would be prudent to measure radiation in fish caught off the West Coast of the U.S. (and Hawaii), and Gundersen suggests we contact our representatives and demand measurement:

Gundersen Discusses Current Condition of Reactors, TEPCO Claim of "No Fission" in Fuel Pool, and Lack of Radiation Monitoring in from Fairewinds Associates on Vimeo.

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