

## Eco-Fraud Eruption by the Bay

Dear Supporter,

San Francisco currently has a severe case of real estate fever, pricing all but the rich out of the new housing market. The city's poorest quarter, Bayview-Hunters Point in the city's southeast corner, is the [latest epicenter](#) of development mania. But, there is a big problem.

The Hunters Point Naval Shipyard was the site of nuclear weapons research. It also received Navy ships contaminated by hydrogen bomb tests in the Pacific, all of which left the shipyard heavily polluted with radioactivity. It has been an EPA Superfund site since 1989.

Now, this nearly 30-year radiation cleanup has run off the tracks. PEER has obtained documents that the remaining contamination is far worse than previously reported. Between 90 and 97% of the U.S. Navy soil samples re-examined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency are "neither reliable nor defensible."



**Hot Property...in More Ways than One.** Hunters Point is being touted as San Francisco's biggest redevelopment since the 1906 earthquake

Beginning in 2010, employees of the Navy's site consultant, Tetra Tech, reported extensive data manipulation, falsification, and other efforts to minimize evidence of soil contamination. In the fall of 2017, internal Navy analyses concluded that [nearly half of the sampling was suspect](#).

Then EPA performed its own review, which found data falsification and quality deficiencies were far wider and deeper than the Navy had admitted. On two major parcels covering nearly half the site, EPA found 90% of samples were suspect on one and 97% [were suspect](#) on the other. In its December 27, 2017 comments, John Chesnutt, an EPA Superfund Manager, wrote:

"The data revealed not only potential purposeful falsification and fraud in terms of sample and/or data manipulation, they also reveal the potential failure to conduct adequate scans, a lack of proper chain of custody for ensuring samples were not tampered with, extensive data quality issues (including off-site laboratory data) and general mismanagement of the entire characterization and cleanup project."

One of the things that makes these findings so remarkable is that the Navy was on notice for years that it had a major data meltdown on its hands yet is still trying to cook the books.

Of course, neither the Navy nor EPA revealed any of this. It took a laser-targeted PEER Freedom of Information Act request to disgorge this information.

This spreading eco-fraud obscures the true level of contamination remaining at the site. As many

as a dozen years of sampling may be worthless. EPA is still reviewing the testing at other parcels covering 60% of the site, so there may be more shoes to drop. Meanwhile, PEER is pursuing these avenues:

- This is a Superfund cleanup where [Scott Pruitt has assumed personal command](#), putting [his policy of real estate reuse](#) over public health to an acid test;
- We are hearing reports that this type of fraudulent activity may be standard behavior by the contractor, Tetra Tech, raising questions about whether the company should remain eligible to receive any more federal contracts; and
- Besides the contractor, what did the Navy know, when did it know it, and why hasn't it done anything?

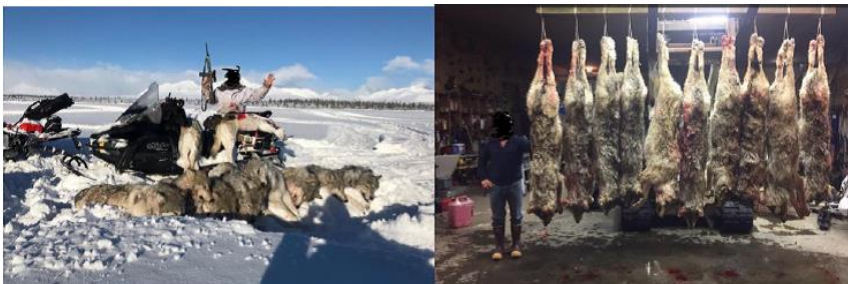
Amid the continuing furor over Scott Pruitt's ethics shenanigans, [real issues affecting public health](#) continue to unfold. Guided by otherwise muzzled public servants this is the trench line where PEER fights. [Please join us](#).

Sincerely,



Jeff Ruch  
Executive Director

**P.S. Hunting with an Assault Rifle.** In a reversal, the State of Alaska has just issued emergency orders to shut down hunting and trapping adjacent to Denali National Park over concerns that [excessive kills may destabilize](#) this iconic wolf population. [PEER has long campaigned](#) for restoring these buffer zones. [Please add your voice](#) to the chorus of hundreds of thousands signing this petition to save Denali's wolves.



**Perfectly Legal.** Alaska claims that mowing down a wolf pack with an AR15 is OK but then ordered an emergency closure on wolf hunting outside national parks.

**P.P.S. If Power is the Ultimate Aphrodisiac, the Opposite May Also be True.** [Samantha Dravis, one of Scott Pruitt's closest aides](#), has abruptly resigned to pursue unspecified private sector opportunities. She had been dating Rob Porter, a senior Trump White House aide, until he started two-timing her with White Communications Director Hope Hicks. Dravis fixed Porter by leaking information about his [ex-wives' claims of physical abuse](#).

This revelation forced Porter's ouster, so he retaliated by leaking info on [Pruitt's cozy condo deal](#). Isn't Trump-Land a lovely place?

**P.P.P.S. Puncturing Pruitt's Toxic Office of Public Affairs.** On July 31, Elizabeth "Betsy" Southerland, a PhD in Environmental Science and Engineering, retired from EPA, having served as a senior executive in both the Water and Superfund programs. During her thirty-year career, she also received the Distinguished Presidential Rank Award.

As she retired, she issued a statement decrying recent EPA actions that put public health and the environment at greater risk. Among other disturbing developments, she cited "an [industry deregulation approach](#) based on abandonment of the polluter pays principle that underlies all environmental statutes."

In a war-room style reaction, EPA's Office of Public Affairs questioned both the veracity of Dr. Southerland's statements and her motivation for making them. Some statements were laughable, such as "We have a great working relationship with career EPA employees." Others were snide, such as saying she walked away with a "six-figure taxpayer-funded pension" – a falsehood repeated for weeks, despite Betsy correcting it. Unfortunately, [these events have become typical](#) for an EPA press office that (in the most over-used word in Scott Pruitt's vocabulary) has become "weaponized."

"In an effort to discredit me for speaking out and to intimidate current EPA employees, EPA may have provided my private employment information to media outlets and a political opposition research firm following my retirement," said Dr. Southerland. "It is disappointing that a career public servant could be treated with such malicious intent."

On October 18, PEER, representing Dr. Southerland, filed a request under both the Privacy Act and the Freedom of Information Act to disclose all agency communications about her following her retirement. The Privacy Act requires that federal agencies provide an individual access to records or information pertaining to him or her upon request. Not surprisingly, EPA ignored the request. So this month, [PEER filed suit to pry documents](#) out of EPA detailing its campaign to smear a distinguished employee who had the temerity to speak out.

**P.P.P.S. New 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Videos.** Our cyber-celebration continues with a video profile of [Teresa Chambers, aka The Honest Chief](#), who won the rarest of all commodities in a whistleblower case – vindication. And we just posted an Origins of PEER profile from our founder [Jeff DeBonis](#). Check out the [full gallery of PEER videos](#) here.