

Study confirms untold levels of oil sands pollution on the Athabasca

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After an exhaustive study of air and water pollution along the Athabasca River and its tributaries from Fort McMurray to Lake Athabasca, researchers say pollution levels have increased as a direct result of nearby oil sands operations.

University of Alberta biological sciences professor David Schindler was part of the team that conducted a long term air and water study and found high levels of Polycyclic Aromatic Compounds. PACs are a group of organic contaminants containing several known carcinogens, mutagens, and teratogens. The highest levels of PAC's were found within 50 kilometres of two major oil sands up graders.

Schindler says that government and industry have claimed the pollution is a naturally occurring seepage from the oil sands deposits and are not related to the oil sands industry.

The research team monitored water and snow packs concentrations of pollutants along the Athabasca in winter and summer of 2008. Schindler and the others report that levels of PACs increased the closer they got to the [oil sands](#) developments and reached a point where the airborne particulates left oil slicks on top of melted snow.

"We found PACs in parts per trillion but they are toxic at parts per trillion," said Schindler.

The new study took measurements at 60 locations along the Athabasca

and its tributaries. Schindler says that currently the Federal Government operates one [water](#) quality collection point in the area.

More information: The research will be published in [Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences](#).

Source: University of Alberta ([news](#) : [web](#))

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