Scientists have found evidence of widespread and rapid declines in flame retardant pollution in many San Francisco Bay species, according to a new study released by the San Francisco Estuary Institute.

Ten years after an industry phase-out of widely-used toxic flame retardants known as polybrominated diphenyl ethers, or PBDEs, the study provides solid evidence that the Bay and its wildlife are recovering rapidly. PBDE levels in cormorants and terns have declined by 74-93%, and levels in sport fish have declined by nearly half. Mussels and sediment are also significantly less contaminated.

The study was part of the Regional Monitoring Program (RMP), administered by the San Francisco Estuary Institute. The RMP, now in its 23rd year, monitors contaminants in the Bay for government and industry leaders.

Once a global hot spot for PBDE contamination, the Bay is now cleaner after the halt in production and use of these toxic flame retardants. The study was published in *Environmental Science & Technology*.

While PBDEs have been phased out nationwide, other flame retardants are still in use. A key state flammability standard has undergone revisions that should reduce flame retardant chemicals in consumer goods, and further reduce contamination of the Bay and other aquatic ecosystems.

**REFERENCES**


Zota et al. 2013. Temporal Comparison of PBDEs, OH-PBDEs, PCBs, and OH-PCBs in the Serum of Second Trimester Pregnant Women Recruited from San Francisco General Hospital, California. *Environmental Science & Technology* 47:11776-11784.