

Greenpeace and Sasol: Timeline

July 14, 1997: Greenpeace and local citizens hang a banner across the Westlake, Louisiana welcome sign near CONDEA Vista and PPG, another vinyl chloride manufacturer in Lake Charles, Louisiana. The 120-foot banner reads, "No More Dioxin Factories, Stop PVC the Poison Plastic."

Spring, 1998: Greenpeace hangs a banner from the top of the Louisiana State Capitol building in Baton Rouge, calling for environmental justice and the phase-out of PVC.

June, 1998: BBI is hired by CONDEA Vista and Nichols Dezenhall. A "Targets" list is created for the "Lake Charles Project" that includes local citizen groups, along with Greenpeace campaigner Beth Zilbert, and Greenpeace's Washington, DC offices.

June, 1998: BBI's Tim Ward and Jay Bly meet in Lake Charles "concerning the gathering of intelligence" at Beth Zilbert's home and a law firm representing workers suing CONDEA Vista and other companies for injuries suffered on the job. Bly continues to send Ward regular reports about his surveillance activities.

1998: BBI subcontractor Mary Lou Sapone hires a former high school science teacher (Dick Rogers) and trains him as an undercover "operative" instructed to infiltrate CLEAN -- a leading local environmental group in Lake Charles. Rogers obtains a position on CLEAN's board, later reporting that he "will be in the "inner circle" and included in all the planning meetings." In an email to BBI covering Rogers' first report, Sapone explains that he is "trained to inquiring, but not participatory. Operatives are not allowed to offer suggestions or "help" the targets in any way. They are trained to seek documents, ID friends and foe legislators and regulators, follow money trails, ID informants, discover future targets and campaign design, ID activists' chain of command, discover plans for illegal activity and civil disobedience, discover support from national groups, and generally discover "what they know." Rogers continues to regularly report to Sapone by email, providing (among other things) communication between Greenpeace and CLEAN. Sapone in turn forwards these reports to BBI project manager Tim Ward, who uses them to brief CONDEA Vista's Peter Markey. While working for BBI and CONDEA Vista, Rogers also takes a position on a local "Citizens Advisory Panel" (CAP), which is supposed to provide citizen input to worse-case accident scenario planning by local industries.

1998: Greenpeace organizes the People's Testimonial on Environmental Justice in Baton Rouge, featuring local activists including residents of Mossville, a low-income African-American community located directly across from CONDEA Vista. The event is organized in conjunction with the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC) meeting. Mossville residents testify about high rates of illness in the community, groundwater contamination and other threats to their health and the local environment.

April, 1999: Greenpeace leads a delegation of Louisiana citizens to the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, where the citizens seek international support for the community's struggle against "environmental racism." The delegation includes Haki Vincent, a resident of Mossville.

April 14, 1999: Under pressure from Greenpeace and local groups, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) releases the results of a study of dioxin levels in Mossville, a predominantly African American community adjacent to CONDEA Vista. The results indicate elevated levels of dioxin in the community.

June, 1999: Greenpeace floats a banner in Calcasieu Estuary reading "Dioxin Starts Here," pointing towards PPG Industries and CONDEA Vista. Greenpeace also posts signs in the estuary warning local residents against swimming and fishing near PPG, where levels of PCBs, dioxins and other chemicals have been found to be significantly elevated.

March 1, 2001: Sasol, the South African state oil company, acquires the CONDEA Vista vinyl chloride plant in Lake Charles.

2001: The Greenpeace vessel Arctic Sunrise conducts the "Cancer Starts Here" in Lake Charles, continuing east to New Orleans and then up the Mississippi to Baton Rouge, to raise awareness of the environmental and health problems affecting the area known as "Cancer Alley."

2002: Greenpeace and the Working Group on Community Right to Know release previously unpublished catastrophic chemical accident scenarios prepared by 50 chemical companies in Louisiana.

2007: Mossville Environmental Action Now, Inc., Goldman Environmental Award-winning chemist Wilma Subra and Advocates for Environmental Human Rights release "Industrial Sources of Dioxin Poisoning in Mossville, Louisiana."

2008: Mother Jones investigative reporter James Ridgeway reveals that various companies, including Dow and CONDEA Vista (now owned by Sasol) hired BBI to spy on Greenpeace in Washington, DC, as well as local citizens in Lake Charles, Louisiana. The story causes Greenpeace to initiate an investigation culminating in a lawsuit against former BBI executives and the companies that hired them to spy on Greenpeace.