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Contact: Anne LeHuray
Phone: (703) 299-8470
Email: news@pavementcouncil.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 19, 2013

Dickinson College study relies on flawed USGS forensic model, provides further substantiation that the use of questionable methodology yields incorrect results

ALEXANDRIA, Virginia, December 19, 2013 – A study just published in the science journal *Environmental Pollution*, authored by professors from Dickinson College’s (Carlisle, PA) Departments of Chemistry and Earth Sciences relies on a flawed chemical forensics model promulgated by the United States Geological Survey (USGS), and in the process raises more questions about publication bias and citation bias.

The article authored by Professor Amy Witter and three Dickinson College colleagues is, surprisingly, titled *Coal-tar-based sealcoated pavement: A major PAH source to urban stream sediments*, thereby suggesting that the study involved evaluation of actual sealcoated paved surfaces. The study, however, contains no information about sealed pavements in the area of the stream mentioned in the title. Rather, the paper is focused on land use.

In a letter to the editor of *Environmental Pollution* that has been accepted for publication, Dr. Kirk O’Reilly asked that the title of Dr. Witter’s paper be changed to reflect its actual content, pointing out that the “data presented in that article do not support the claim that refined tar pavement sealers (RTS) are a major source of [PAHs] in urban sediments.” Dr. O’Reilly further explains in his letter to the editor that “While [Professor Witter and coauthors] refer to papers written by those who promoted the RTS hypothesis ... they fail to cite those that challenge these findings...” The most recent of the papers that challenge the hypothesis and the model used to support the claim that RTS is a major source of PAHs in urban sediments can be accessed [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#). Other published papers and Data Quality Act challenges documenting the many flaws of the RTS hypothesis can be accessed at PavementCouncil.org.

PavementCouncil.org has funded evaluation of source identification and apportionment models as part of an effort to understand how pavement sealers and other common sources of PAHs, such as vehicle traffic and burning wood, may be contributing to PAHs in the environment. PavementCouncil.org is concerned the paper authored by Dickinson College faculty appearing in *Environmental Pollution* may be contributing to a phenomenon known in the scientific literature as “White Hat Bias,” whereby objective science is adversely influenced “. . . by

2308 Mount Vernon Avenue, Suite 134
Alexandria Virginia 22301

Phone: +1 (703) 299-8470
Fax: +1 (703) 842-8850
news@pavementcouncil.org

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feelings of righteous zeal, indignation toward certain aspects of industry, or other factors.” First identified in the field of obesity research, it is now feared that White Hat Bias has worked its way in the field of environmental research as well.

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ABOUT PAVEMENTCOUNCIL.ORG

Members of pavementcouncil.org are manufacturers of pavement sealants and their suppliers. Also known as the Pavement Coatings Technology Council (PCTC), PavementCouncil.org is a not-for-profit trade association engaged in research, education, training and communications with the goal of improving the public’s understanding of the pavement coatings business. Most of the companies involved in the pavement coatings industry are small and medium size businesses that generate well-paying jobs and support local economies. They are the types of businesses that are proud to be a part of your community.

If you would like more information about this topic, or to schedule an interview, please send an email to news@pavementcouncil.org. Additional background and other information are available at pavementcouncil.org.



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