April 26th is the 28th anniversary of the nuclear reactor explosion at Chernobyl, Ukraine.
Beyond Nuclear spokespeople are available for commentary. (Source links at the end of the press release.)

Chernobyl No “Eden” Say Beyond Nuclear Experts

Study shows alarming ecological decline, not “thriving” wildlife

TAKOMA PARK, MD — A newly published study has uncovered alarming indications of biological loss and ecological collapse in the area around the Chernobyl nuclear reactor that exploded in Ukraine on April 26, 1986.

Nuclear boosters have long claimed that the superficial appearance of teeming wildlife in the approximately 1,000 square mile Chernobyl exclusion zone indicates an Eden-like outcome. But the study observed a frightening halt to organic decay and the disappearance of important microbes that indicate the steady advance of a potential “silent spring.”

“The illusion that the absence of humanity can only benefit wildlife is trumped when humanity has inflicted man-made poisons on a fragile ecosystem whose inhabitants are now biologically compromised by radiation exposures that will continue indefinitely,” observed Linda Gunter, international specialist at Beyond Nuclear, of the study’s findings.

Highly reduced mass loss rates and increased litter layer in radioactively contaminated areas, published in Oecologia, March 4, 2014, by Mousseau, Milinevsky, Kenney-Hunt and Møller, found that the natural cycle of decay of organic materials around Chernobyl is largely dependent on microbial communities which have been significantly reduced in these radioactively contaminated zones.

“We already know about plant and insect mutations and the shortened lifespans of birds in the zone, but this news is even more alarming,” said Paul Gunter, Director of Reactor Oversight at Beyond Nuclear. “The long-term consequences of the loss of this essential microbial community could be unprecedented ecologically, while the most immediate consequence is the build-up of undecayed leaf matter. This creates an increased risk of forest fires which could spread radioactivity to uncontaminated areas,” Gunter said.
“This eerie discovery follows many other indications that radiation around Chernobyl has affected wildlife in serious and negative long-term ways such as increased radiosensitivity across generations,” said Cindy Folkers, Radiation and Health Specialist at Beyond Nuclear. “Animals exposed to the same amount of radiation as their parents, are damaged more heavily, meaning that damage predictions based on scientific data from one generation may not protect their offspring.”

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Beyond Nuclear aims to educate and activate the public about the connections between nuclear power and nuclear weapons and the need to abandon both to safeguard our future. Beyond Nuclear advocates for an energy future that is sustainable, benign and democratic. The Beyond Nuclear team works with diverse partners and allies to provide the public, government officials, and the media with the critical information necessary to move humanity toward a world beyond nuclear: www.beyondnuclear.org.

**SOURCES**

*Highly reduced mass loss rates and increased litter layer in radioactively contaminated areas.*


*Press release University of South Carolina, Mousseau study, March 2014*

http://www.sc.edu/uofsc/stories/2014/03_tim_mousseau_microbial_decomposition_chernobyl.php#.U1AfNMe_ymE

*Spread of Chernobyl contamination*

http://www.ratical.org/radiation/Chernobyl/IRSN14dayPlume.html

*BBC 2007 “not a wildlife haven”*

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/6946210.stm