



**HAL**  
open science

## Radionuclides in waters and suspended sediments in the Rhone River (France) - Current contents, anthropic pressures and trajectories

F. Eyrolle-Boyer, Hugo Lepage, C. Antonelli, Amandine Morereau, C. Cossonnet, Patrick Boyer, Rudolfo Gurriaran

### ► To cite this version:

F. Eyrolle-Boyer, Hugo Lepage, C. Antonelli, Amandine Morereau, C. Cossonnet, et al.. Radionuclides in waters and suspended sediments in the Rhone River (France) - Current contents, anthropic pressures and trajectories. Science of the Total Environment, 2020, 723, pp.137873. 10.1016/j.scitotenv.2020.137873 . hal-01787317

HAL Id: hal-01787317

<https://hal.science/hal-01787317v1>

Submitted on 21 Dec 2021

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



Distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution - NonCommercial - NoDerivatives 4.0 International License

1      Radionuclides in waters and suspended sediments in the Rhone River  
2            (France) - Current contents, anthropic pressures and trajectories

3      Frédérique Eyrolle\*, Hugo Lepage, Christelle Antonelli, Amandine Morereau, Catherine Cossonnet,  
4      Patrick Boyer, Rodolfo Gurriaran

5      Institut de Radioprotection et de Sureté Nucléaire (IRSN), PSE-ENV, SRTE/LRTA, SEREN/LEREN, SAME/LMRE, BP 3,  
6      13115 Saint-Paul-lez-Durance, France.

7      \* Corresponding author: [frederique.eyrolle@irsn.fr](mailto:frederique.eyrolle@irsn.fr)

# Radionuclides in waters and suspended sediments in the Rhone River (France) - Current contents, anthropic pressures and trajectories

---

## ABSTRACT

---

The Rhone River is one of the most nuclearized river in the world. Radionuclide concentrations in water and suspended sediments transferred to the marine environment were intensively monitored in this river over the last decades (2002–2018). Over this period of time, more than 12 and 25 time integrating samples were collected each year in filtered waters and suspended sediments, respectively, and analyzed for their radionuclide contents at ultra-trace levels by using top performance analytical tools. While more than 60% of plutonium, americium, cesium, cobalt, silver, beryllium and actinium radioisotopes are carried by sedimentary particles, sodium, tritium, antimony and strontium are mainly exported as dissolved species (>90%) due to their low affinity with particles. Most natural radionuclides contents show low seasonal variation. No significant trends are observed over the last two decades for these elements, even for  $^{40}\text{K}$  widely used in fertilizers after the middle of the last century, indicating that the basin has currently converged towards geochemical equilibrium for all of them. In contrast, the concentrations of numerous anthropogenic radionuclides originating from nuclear industries significantly declined since the beginning of the 2000s. Assuming no change of the current anthropic and climatic pressures over the next decades, apparent periods, i.e. the time required for a reduction by half the concentrations in the downstream part of the Rhône River, would be close to 6 years for most artificial radionuclides, except for tritium and other artificial radionuclides conveyed to the river by soil leaching and erosion ( $^{90}\text{Sr}$ ,  $^{241}\text{Am}$ , plutonium isotopes) which would be far longer. Referring to regional referential backgrounds, only few anthropogenic radionuclides specifically produced by nuclear industries are still detectable at the downstream part of the Rhone River and excess contents of tritium,  $^{238}\text{Pu}$  and  $^{241}\text{Am}$  are observed in filtered waters.

## 24 1. Introduction

25 Numerous organic or inorganic contaminants and chemical parameters were monitored for decades in many river  
26 systems all over the world. Time series acquired most generally constitute useful tools to assess environmental  
27 impact from anthropic pressures exerted over time, address pollutant trajectories and forecast modelling (e.g.,  
28 [Meybeck et al., 2008](#); [Molle and Wester, 2009](#); [Duan et al., 2018](#); [Ghashghaie et al., 2018](#)). Since the middle of the  
29 last century when nuclear industries have developed, contents of naturally occurring and anthropogenic  
30 radionuclides are widely investigated within the various environmental compartments around the world due to  
31 the radiotoxicity of these elements. Radionuclides display a large range of physico-chemical properties and cannot  
32 be always directly compared to the behavior and fate of their homologous stable element ([Gil-Díaz et al., 2020](#)).  
33 Time series from high frequency monitoring of radionuclides are regularly reported in the literature for river  
34 systems (e.g., [Palms et al., 2007](#); [Eyrolle et al., 2008](#); [Maringer et al., 2009](#);) or marine environments (e.g.,  
35 [Thompson, 1988](#); [Topçuoğlu et al., 2010](#); [Buesseler et al., 2017](#)), giving precious data sets for environmental  
36 impact and resiliency assessment of hydro systems faced to these contaminant family.

37 The Rhone River is one of the most nuclearized rivers in the world, with four Nuclear Power Plants (Bugey, Saint-  
38 Alban, Cruas and Tricastin) and a spent fuel reprocessing center (Marcoule) that has undergone dismantlement  
39 since 1997. These installations use the Rhone River waters for cooling the reactor and diluting liquid effluents with  
40 low levels of radioactivity that they produce and discharge in regards of the regulations.

41 The river is also the receptacle of erosion products from the soils of a watershed covering nearly a fifth of the  
42 surface area of continental France. Such eroded products contain both radionuclides of natural origin as well as  
43 radionuclides of anthropogenic origin due to their remanence in soils since the atmospheric fallout of nuclear tests  
44 and the Chernobyl accident ([Leroux, 2007](#); [Eyrolle et al., 2012](#); [Zebracki et al., 2013b](#)).

45 The Rhone River is a considerable water resource at the inter-regional scale, notably for irrigation and drinking  
46 water supplies. Lastly, it is one of the major rivers flowing into the Mediterranean Sea and exports the major part  
47 of freshwater and sediment fluxes provided by continental surfaces in this marine environment ([Ludwig et al.,](#)  
48 [2009](#); [Panagiotopoulos et al., 2012](#)).

49 For almost two decades, the SORA monitoring station (Rhône Observatory Station at Arles), located at the  
50 downstream part of the Rhône River, collected water and suspended sediments to determine the concentrations  
51 of numerous gamma, beta and alpha emitting radionuclides. Thanks to samples of large volumes of water and high  
52 performance metrology capable of analyses at very low levels, SORA allows the detection of a multitude of  
53 anthropogenic radionuclides now present at trace levels, notably in filtered waters (Antonelli, 2017).

54 The aim of this article is to (1) make known the current levels of natural and anthropogenic radionuclides in waters  
55 at the downstream part of the Rhône River, (2) describe the trajectories of these trace elements, i.e. temporal  
56 trends over the studied period and (3) contrast these data with data sets acquired from surrounding coastal rivers  
57 preserved from industrial nuclear discharges in order to estimate excess contents and environmental impact.

## 58 **2. Method Summary**

### 59 **2.1 Samples and samplings**

#### 60 **2.1.1 Monitoring station on the lower course of the Rhône River (SORA)**

61 Suspended sediments (SS) and filtered water (FW) samples were collected according to a protocol described by  
62 Masson et al. (2004). Briefly, outside flood periods, a composite sample (7000 L) resulting from samples (13.5 L)  
63 taken every 80 minutes is collected over a period of about one month. During flood periods (discharges over 3 000  
64 m<sup>3</sup>/s), the composite sample is produced using 5 L samples taken every 60 minutes over 24 hours and directly  
65 filtered onto 0.5 µm Milligard® cellulose acetate cartridges. The filter clogging is continuously monitored, so that  
66 the filtration is stopped when 50% of clogging was achieved or after 8 h. Radionuclide analyses are performed on  
67 the particulate fraction and on the dissolved fraction (fraction less than 0.5 µm). Additionally, a Time integrated  
68 sediment sampler (TISS) continuously collected SS for 1 month for organically bound tritium (OBT) analyses and a  
69 time integrated water sampler, preserving water samples from atmospheric exchanges, collected few milliliters  
70 per 80 minutes for tritium (HTO) analyses after a subsampling of 50 mL filtered with 0.22 µm glass fiber filters.

#### 71 **2.1.2 Regional referential backgrounds: Orb and Hérault rivers**

72 The SS and FW samples were collected each two years between 2011 and 2017 in the non-nuclearized coastal  
73 rivers Orb (Cessenon-sur-Orb) and Hérault (Aspiran) in order to acquire regional environmental references (Figure  
74 1). Water samples are directly filtered onto 0.5 µm Milligard® cellulose acetate cartridges. The filter clogging is

75 continuously monitored, so that the filtration is stopped when 50% of clogging was achieved or after 8 h.  
76 Radionuclide analyses are performed on the particulate fraction and on the dissolved fraction (fraction less than  
77 0.5  $\mu\text{m}$ ). For tritium analyses 70 mL water samples were filtered in situ using a syringe equipped with a 0.22  $\mu\text{m}$   
78 glass fiber filter, placed in a preconditioned amber glass flask and stored at 4°C until analyses.

79

## 80 2.2 Radionuclide analyses

### 81 2.2.1. Gamma emitters

82 For gamma spectrometry analyses SS samples were ashed and FW samples were slowly evaporated (40°C) to  
83 dryness. All the samples were put into tightly closed plastic boxes for gamma counting (20–60 g) using low-  
84 background and high resolution Germanium Hyper pure detectors at the IRSN/LMRE laboratory in Orsay ([Bouisset  
85 and Calmet, 1997](#)). For each sample, up to 25 gamma emitting radionuclides (both natural and anthropogenic)  
86 were determined. Efficiency calibrations were constructed using gamma-ray sources in a 1.15  $\text{g}/\text{cm}^3$  density solid  
87 resin–water equivalent matrix. Activity results were corrected for true coincidence summing and self-absorption  
88 effects ([Lefèvre et al., 2003](#)). Measured activities, expressed in Bq/kg dry weight or Bq/L, are decay-corrected to  
89 the date of sampling. The activity uncertainty was estimated as the combination of calibration uncertainties,  
90 counting statistics, and summing and self-absorption correction uncertainties.

### 91 2.2.2. Alpha emitters

92 When available sample amount was sufficient (i.e., 50–200 g of dry matter), analyses of plutonium isotopes ( $^{238}\text{Pu}$   
93 and  $^{239} + ^{240}\text{Pu}$ ) and other transuranium elements ( $^{241}\text{Am}$ ,  $^{244}\text{Cm}$ ) were performed by alpha spectrometry at  
94 IRSN/LMRE ([Goutelard et al., 1998](#); [Lansard et al., 2007](#)). In brief, ashed samples were leached with nitric acid, co-  
95 precipitated and purified using exchange resins before electro-deposition, and then counted on low background  
96 PIPS® detectors for up to 14 days. The detection limit for the analytical procedure was 1 mBq for both  $^{238}\text{Pu}$  and  
97  $^{239+240}\text{Pu}$ .

### 98 2.2.3. $^{90}\text{Sr}$ analyses

99 In brief, samples were ashed and leached with hydrochloric acid. Strontium was separated through oxalate  
100 precipitation. Impurities were removed with hydroxide precipitation then another oxalate precipitation following

101 by Eichrom Sr-resin for separation of strontium. Equilibrium reached with yttrium. Then Y-90 was measured as  
102 yttrium oxalate by gas proportional counter. Yield was measured with Sr-85 tracer by gamma spectrometry (NF ISO  
103 18589-5, 2009).

#### 104 2.2.4. HTO and OBT analyses

105 HTO analyses were performed by the so-called conventional liquid scintillation counting (LSC) (AFNOR, 2015). The  
106 decision is 0.65 Bq/L (10 mL, 17 h counting). OBT analyses were performed by the  $^3\text{He}$  ingrowth method after  
107 placing the sample in a vacuum ( $10^{-9}$  mbar) and after storage (for 3 to 4 months) (Jean-Baptiste et al., 2010). This  
108 method is generally used when the samples contain little organic matter (%H<2%), determines the  $^3\text{He}$  levels  
109 produced by the decay of the  $^3\text{H}$  contained in the sample after normalization of the values to ambient atmospheric  
110 levels ( $^3\text{He}/^4\text{He}$ ) and correction of the radiogenic  $^4\text{He}$  levels contained in the sample (gaseous inclusions).  $^3\text{He}/^4\text{He}$   
111 are measured by mass spectrometry (MS). The analysis results are expressed in Bq/kg<sub>dry</sub>. The conversion to Bq/L  
112 requires the analysis of the sample hydrogen content. This last unit is necessary because it makes possible to  
113 address the carrier phase of tritium, that is to say, water, in hydrogen equivalent, thereby allowing the comparison  
114 of the OBT levels with the environment HTO levels.

### 115 3. Origin of radionuclides in the Rhone River

#### 116 3.1. Naturally occurring radionuclides

117 Natural radioactivity is mainly due to primordial telluric radionuclides from  $^{238}\text{U}$ ,  $^{232}\text{Th}$  families and  $^{40}\text{K}$ . The  $^{238}\text{U}$   
118 and  $^{232}\text{Th}$  families comprise 14 and 10 daughter nuclides, respectively including  $^{234}\text{Th}$  and  $^{234\text{m}}\text{Pa}$  for the former,  
119 and  $^{228}\text{Ac}$  for the latter. These mother radionuclides present on earth since their origin have very long radioactive  
120 half-lives (4.5 billion years for  $^{238}\text{U}$ , 14 billion years for  $^{232}\text{Th}$ ). In rivers, most of radionuclides from this natural  
121 origin originate from the drainage of soils in the watershed even though their use over the nuclear fuel cycling for  
122 military and industrial purpose can be expected to modify their natural contents and trajectories at local or  
123 regional scales. Naturally occurring radionuclides are also produced continuously in the atmosphere under the  
124 action of cosmic radiation. Radionuclides involved in these latter processes are for example  $^3\text{H}$ ,  $^{14}\text{C}$ ,  $^7\text{Be}$  and  $^{22}\text{Na}$ .  
125 These cosmogenic radionuclides are deposited on soil surfaces by rains and finally converged to river systems by  
126 drainage of the watershed soils (Le Roux, 2007; Zebracki et al., 2013a, 2013b; Eyrolle-Boyer et al., 2014c).

127 Geological and climatic diversity, as observed at the regional scale, leads to a considerable spatial variability of the  
128 contents of natural radionuclides in soils and river systems (Le Roux, 2007). Additionally, due to their specific  
129 physicochemical properties, radionuclides from natural origin are liable to be enriched or depleted in various  
130 environmental compartments leading to disequilibrium from initial sources. Those results in natural radioactivity  
131 being strongly dependent on geological and environmental conditions, whether in the soils, sediments or river  
132 waters.

133 The  $^{40}\text{K}$  and families of  $^{238}\text{U}$  and  $^{232}\text{Th}$  contribute the most to the natural radioactivity of rivers, most generally in  
134 close proportions, whether in the dissolved or particulate phases (Eyrolle et al., 2008).

### 135 3.2. Anthropogenic radionuclides

136 Anthropogenic radionuclides were initially introduced in the environment at the beginning of the last century  
137 through the use of their luminescent properties (radium, tritium) in watchmaking workshops. Various  
138 radionuclides were then introduced from the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by the military and industrial uses of  
139 nuclear energy.

140 Anthropogenic radionuclides currently conveyed by the Rhone River have several origins:

141 • Atmospheric fallout from nuclear tests carried out between 1945 and 1980 and that from the Chernobyl  
142 accident. Although most of the short-lived and medium-lived radionuclides (i.e.,  $T_{1/2} < 5$  years) originating from  
143 these fallouts have disappeared from the environment due to their radioactive decay, residual contents in  $^{137}\text{Cs}$ ,  
144  $^{90}\text{Sr}$  and in transuranium elements ( $^{238}\text{Pu}$ ,  $^{239+240}\text{Pu}$ ,  $^{241}\text{Am}$ ) were registered in the soils of the Rhone basin (Perkins  
145 and Thomas, 1980; Duffa, 2001; IRSN, 2013). These residual radionuclides are progressively transferred to the river  
146 systems as dissolved species and/or associated with solid particles by soil leaching and erosion processes.

147 • Liquid discharges from nuclear industries located along the Rhone River carried out according to  
148 regulations: the spent nuclear fuel reprocessing plant of Marcoule (under dismantlement since 1997), the Nuclear  
149 Power Plants (NPP) of Bugey, Saint-Alban, Cruas and Tricastin and, to a lesser extent, the sites of Pierrelatte and  
150 Creys-Malville NPP's which is being dismantled. The center of Marcoule still contributes today to significant  
151 industrial discharges of radionuclides into the Rhone River waters (Antonelli; 2008b; Eyrolle et al., 2012a; Eyrolle et



152 [al., 2012b; Eyrolle-Boyer et al., 2015a](#)). Tritium is currently the preponderant radionuclide released in waters by  
153 nuclear facilities in France. At the downstream part of Rhone River, more than 95% of tritium and around 50% of  
154  $^{14}\text{C}$  originate nowadays from the liquid discharges from the nuclear industry ([Eyrolle et al., 2013; Eyrolle-Boyer et](#)  
155 [al., 2015a](#)).

156 • Hospital discharges. Several diagnostic and care units using radioactive sources are installed along the  
157 Rhone River and several of its tributaries. The radionuclides used are generally short-lived (e.g.  $^{131}\text{I}$ ,  $T_{1/2}=8$  days)  
158 and quickly disappear from the environment.

159 • Liquid discharges from installations located on tributaries of the Rhone River, such as the AREVA plant and  
160 the Research Institute of Grenoble both on the Isère River and the Cadarache Center on the Durance River.

161 • Tritiated residues from watchmaking workshops installed on the watershed of the upper Rhone since the  
162 middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (e.g., [Krejci and Zeller, 1979; Jean-Baptiste et al, 2007](#)). These compounds discharged  
163 into the environment are most probably in the form of refractory sub-micrometric particles (polystyrene) even  
164 though they have never been characterized precisely. As a consequence, relatively high contents of organically  
165 bound tritium (OBT) are observed along the whole length of the river ([Eyrolle et al., 2018; Jean-Baptiste et al,](#)  
166 [2019](#)). The use of tritium in watchmaking has decreased from the 1970s in Switzerland, and it has been forbidden  
167 in France since 1990 and in Switzerland since 2007 ([Morereau et al., in prep](#)).

## 168 **4. Results and discussion**

### 169 **4.1. Solid/solution partitioning of radionuclides in waters of the downstream part of the Rhone** 170 **River**

171 In river waters, most stable and radioactive trace elements are distributed among the dissolved and particulate  
172 phases. These distributions depend upon various parameters including the chemical properties of the element, the  
173 nature and concentration of suspended sedimentary particles, the physicochemical characteristics of river waters  
174 such as pH and ionic strength. It is most generally assessed by apparent distribution coefficient ( $K_d$ , in L/kg),  
175 expressing the partition of the element between the two phases ([Abril et Fraga, 1996](#)). The greater the propensity  
176 of the radionuclide to be fixed onto particles, the higher the  $K_d$  value. Conversely, the more the element remain in

177 solution, the lower it is. Table 1 shows, in decreasing order, the mean and standard deviations of the Kd values of  
178 the main radionuclides quantified over the 2002-2018 period for the downstream part of the Rhone River. These  
179 Kd values are in good accordance with the IAEA Kd distributions for all the anthropogenic radionuclides: <sup>241</sup>Am,  
180 <sup>60</sup>Co, <sup>54</sup>Mn, <sup>137</sup>Cs, <sup>239,238</sup>Pu, <sup>90</sup>Sr and <sup>244</sup>Cm. For naturally occurring radionuclides, the accordance is correct for <sup>7</sup>Be,  
181 <sup>226,228</sup>Ra, <sup>234,238</sup>U, <sup>40</sup>K and <sup>228</sup>Th but not for <sup>234</sup>Pa, <sup>232,230,234</sup>Th and <sup>125</sup>Sb for which the Kd values in the downstream  
182 part of the Rhone River are one order of magnitude lower than the 5<sup>th</sup> percentile of the IAEA Kd distributions.

183 Amounts of radionuclides transferred by suspended sediments, ASS in %, are related to Kd and SS content owing  
184 the following theoretical relationship :

$$185 \quad \text{ASS} = 100 * \text{Kd} * \text{SSC} / (1 + \text{Kd} * \text{SSC})$$

186 with Kd in L/kg, and SSC, the suspended sediment content, in kg/L.

187 The ASS were calculated for the various radionuclides based on mean Kd values determined over the 2002-2018  
188 period and the mean SSC of the downstream part of the Rhône River which is 50 mg/L during this same period.  
189 Figure 2 shows that more than 60% of plutonium, americium, cesium, cobalt, silver, beryllium and actinium  
190 deliveries towards the marine environment are associated with solid particles due to the strong affinity of these  
191 elements with SS (high Kd values). In contrast, sodium, tritium, antimony and strontium are mainly exported as  
192 dissolved species (>90%) due to their low affinity with particles (low Kd values). ASS calculated in this study with  
193 the mean values of Kd and SSC are very close to ASS reported in [Antonelli, 2017](#) which were estimated from the  
194 yearly monitoring of SS content, flow rate and radionuclide concentration in dissolved and solid phases (Figure 3).  
195 These results highlight the relevance of both Kd values determined at the downstream Rhone River and  
196 dissolved/solid exports quantified from monitoring.

## 197 4.2 Radionuclide contents in suspended sediments and trajectories

### 198 4.2.1. Naturally occurring radionuclides

199 <sup>40</sup>K, <sup>7</sup>Be and daughter elements from <sup>238</sup>U and <sup>232</sup>Th chains, such as <sup>234m</sup>Pa and <sup>228</sup>Ac, contribute for the greater part  
200 of radioactivity of natural origin of suspended sediments transported by the Rhone River as generally observed in  
201 most of environmental media ([Le Roux, 2007](#), [Eyrolle et al., 2008](#), [Laubenstein and Magaldi, 2008](#); [Eyrolle et al.,](#)

202 [2012a,b](#)). It is not expected that concentrations of radionuclides of natural origin change over time at human scale  
203 and measures performed since the 2000s have shown the relative stability of concentrations over this timescale  
204 (Figure 4). However, intra-annual variations of the concentrations of various radionuclides from telluric origin, such  
205 as  $^{228}\text{Ac}$  and  $^{40}\text{K}$ , should be emphasized. For these elements, time series concentrations indicate minimal  
206 radionuclide contents during spring and maximal values during autumn. These observations are most probably  
207 explained by the nature and origin of the minerals transferring these elements according to Rhone River's  
208 hydrology characterized by contrasting geo climatic water mass supplies among the year at basin scale ([Pardé,](#)  
209 [1925](#); [Pont, 1997](#); [Ottlé et al., 2001](#)). Moreover, in the case of  $^{40}\text{K}$ , the utilization of potassium-based fertilizers can  
210 disturb natural concentrations and their seasonal variations. At the beginning of the 1990s, excess contents in  $^{40}\text{K}$   
211 were recorded in the suspended matter of most French hydrosystems (Figure 5). These contents have decreased  
212 since this period in most watersheds as reported in [Grosbois et al. \(2016\)](#). Our data indicate that  $^{40}\text{K}$  contents in  
213 suspended sediments at the downstream part of the Rhone River are stable since almost two decades (2002-2018)  
214 with a mean value of  $477\pm 97$  Bq/kg, which is about half  $^{40}\text{K}$  contents registered in the middle of the 2000s for the  
215 Loire River draining important sedimentary basin surfaces. These results underline that anthropic pressures  
216 associated with potassium-based fertilizer uses would have declined towards geochemical backgrounds for the  
217 Rhone River suggesting resiliency recovery for this radionuclide. Nevertheless, observations on longer time scale  
218 are needed to confirm this trajectory.

219 The  $^7\text{Be}$  is a short-lived radionuclide of cosmogenic origin that disappears relatively quickly from the environment  
220 due to its short radioactive decay ( $T_{1/2}=53$  days). The  $^7\text{Be}$  contents vary over a wide range of values in comparison  
221 with other naturally occurring radionuclides. Its contents strongly depend on both the age of the river water  
222 masses and precipitation amounts in the watershed. High  $^7\text{Be}$  contents would point to recent contribution of  
223 rainwaters and rapid transfer of waters and particles from the watershed surfaces towards the river. During flood  
224 events, particles are most generally depleted in  $^7\text{Be}$  due the contribution of older materials that no longer contain  
225  $^7\text{Be}$  through remobilization of bed sediments or deep soil erosion. The  $^7\text{Be}$  therefore contribute more sporadically  
226 than the other naturally occurring radionuclides to the natural radioactivity of suspended sediments in transit in  
227 the river.

## 228 4.2.2. Anthropogenic radionuclides

229 Radioactive discharges from nuclear industries performed under regulation are not continuous. Anthropogenic  
230 radionuclide contents obviously depend on the fluctuation of radioactive discharges from nuclear industries when  
231 these latter constitute the major source term. Furthermore, rising flow rates and suspended sediment  
232 concentration most generally lead to the decrease of anthropogenic radionuclides contents owing to dilution with  
233 the sediments delivered by tributaries (Eyrolle et al., 2012). This trend has been widely reported for trace metals  
234 and is suggested to be due to a higher contribution of coarse materials and/or to the erosion of less polluted  
235 sediments (e.g., Schleichert 1975; Bradley and Lewin 1982; Dawson and Macklin 1998).

236 Concentrations in anthropogenic radionuclides are significantly lower than those of natural radionuclides, by one  
237 or two orders of magnitude (Figure 4). The radionuclides of anthropogenic origin detected in 2018 in the  
238 suspended sediments of the downstream part of the Rhone River are, by decreasing order of contents,  $^{137}\text{Cs}$ ,  $^{60}\text{Co}$ ,  
239  $^{241}\text{Am}$ ,  $^{90}\text{Sr}$ , OBT,  $^{239+240}\text{Pu}$ ,  $^{238}\text{Pu}$  and  $^{244}\text{Cm}$ . Among these radionuclides, only  $^{60}\text{Co}$  and  $^{244}\text{Cm}$  originate only from  
240 nuclear industries. The other ones are also contributed by soil erosion of the watersheds submitted to atmospheric  
241 fallout from past nuclear tests and the Chernobyl accident. The  $^{58}\text{Co}$  is no more detected since 2012 in suspended  
242 sediments, likewise  $^{110\text{m}}\text{Ag}$  and  $^{54}\text{Mn}$  since 2014. In 2018, as in previous years,  $^{137}\text{Cs}$  is the preponderant  
243 radionuclide of anthropogenic origin in suspended sediments with contents ranging from  $4.1\pm 0.6$  to  $43.9\pm 1.1$   
244  $\text{Bq/kg}_{\text{dry}}$ , i.e. values close to those recorded during previous years. The  $^{60}\text{Co}$ , detected in 100% of the  
245 samples, also remains a preponderant anthropogenic radionuclide in the suspended sediments transiting in the  
246 lower part of the Rhone River. Its concentration, ranging from  $0.7\pm 0.2$  to  $12.4\pm 1.6$   $\text{Bq/kg}_{\text{dry}}$  in 2018, are  
247 significantly lower than those of  $^{137}\text{Cs}$ , on average by a factor of 4 over the period 2002-2018 (Figure 6). Time series  
248 indicate very close reductions of contents for these two radionuclides since the beginning of the 2000s (Figure 6).  
249 This observation could point to a same predominant origin, and would indicate that most  $^{137}\text{Cs}$  continues today to  
250 originate from nuclear industries; contribution from watershed erosion being secondary as observed at the  
251 beginning of the 2010s (Eyrolle et al., 2014a).

252 Effective (or apparent) periods (EP), i.e. the time required for a reduction by half of radionuclide contents in  
253 environmental media, can be assessed from time series by considering exponential type decreasing over a given  
254 period of time, following the theoretical relationship:

$$255 \quad \text{SSR} = a \cdot \exp^{(\ln 2/EP) \cdot t}$$

256 with SSR, the content of radionuclides in suspended sediments, in Bq/kg<sub>dry</sub>, a, the initial content at t=0, t the time,  
257 in day, and EP the effective period, in day.

258 The EP includes both radioactive decay and natural dilution/dispersion processes and are useful tools to assess  
259 both dilution processes in environmental compartments and predict temporal trends of pollution levels.  
260 Exponential type relationships obtained for <sup>137</sup>Cs and <sup>60</sup>Co over 2002-2018 are reported in Figure 6. Calculated EP  
261 are both close to 6 years which is as expected shorter than radioactive decay periods of <sup>137</sup>Cs (T<sub>1/2</sub>=30.1y) and <sup>60</sup>Co  
262 (T<sub>1/2</sub>=5.2y). These results would reflect the reduction of anthropic pressure (reduction of industrial radioactive  
263 discharges) as well as the efficiency of the Rhone River system to dilute and remove particle reactive  
264 contaminants.

265 The <sup>90</sup>Sr contents are almost stable since the two last decades, varying from 0.25±0.08 Bq/kg<sub>dry</sub> to 1.8±0.3 Bq/kg<sub>dry</sub>.  
266 The transuranium elements (<sup>239+240</sup>Pu, <sup>238</sup>Pu, <sup>244</sup>Cm and <sup>241</sup>Am) are most generally detected at very low levels in  
267 suspended sediments following radiochemical extraction and purification steps. In 2018, their contents ranged  
268 from 0.27±0.04 to 7.7±0.1 Bq/kg<sub>dry</sub> for <sup>241</sup>Am, from 0.09±0.02 to 0.33±0.04 Bq/kg<sub>dry</sub> for <sup>239+240</sup>Pu, from 0.011±0.002  
269 to 0.07±0.01 Bq/kg<sub>dry</sub> for <sup>238</sup>Pu, and from 0.003±0.0001 to 0.09±0.02 Bq/kg<sub>dry</sub> for <sup>244</sup>Cm. Each of these ranges  
270 extends over several orders of magnitude and no significant temporal trend can be pointed out among the two last  
271 decades. These results suggest long resiliency periods for the river system regarding these latter elements  
272 whatever are their origins assuming no change of the current climatic and anthropic pressures.

273 The <sup>238</sup>Pu/<sup>239+240</sup>Pu activity ratio (AR) is a useful tool to discriminate the origins of plutonium isotopes among  
274 industrial discharges and soil erosion. Figure 7 shows that industrial releases still contribute today to a significant  
275 marking of suspended sediments in this part of the river. Indeed, AR measured in 2018, ranging from 0.024±0.002  
276 to 0.136±0.008, are in most of cases significantly higher than AR characterizing atmospheric fallout, i.e. eroded  
277 products from the soils (0.03; Hirose and Povinec, 2015). Calculations resulting from AR mixing equations (Rolland,

278 [2006](#)) indicate that about 40% of the  $^{239+240}\text{Pu}$  and 80% of  $^{238}\text{Pu}$  measured in 2018 in the suspended sediments  
279 would come from industrial releases. In the 1990s, these proportions were both close to 100%. Part of these  
280 amounts can obviously originate from contaminated sediment remobilization from sedimentary reservoirs. These  
281 results reinforce that without any modification of the current climatic and anthropic pressures the resiliency of the  
282 Rhone River face to plutonium industrial inputs from the spent fuel reprocessing plant will be long (> 50 years).  
283 Since 2008, OBT analyses are performed on suspended sediments collected at SORA. OBT contents directly depend  
284 on organic matter contents and vary over a wide range of values, from  $0.05\pm 0.01$  to  $5.34\pm 0.27$  Bq/kg<sub>dry</sub>, i.e. values  
285 close to  $^{90}\text{Sr}$  contents for example. OBT contents in suspended sediments expressed in Bq/L of combusive water  
286 (Bq/L<sub>cw</sub>) allow considering the carrying organic phase only ([Eyrolle et al., 2018](#)). Between 2008 and 2018, OBT  
287 concentrations varied over a wide range, from  $3.21\pm 0.84$  to  $141\pm 7$  Bq/L<sub>cw</sub>. These levels are far higher than  
288 referential values recorded in sediments of non-industrialized rivers, i.e. river systems preserved from liquid  
289 releases of nuclear installations, i.e.  $2.4\pm 0.6$  Bq/L ([Eyrolle-Boyer et al., 2015b](#); [Ducros et al., 2017](#)). These are also  
290 most generally higher than free tritium contents (HTO) in the Rhône river waters (varying from  $1.0\pm 0.7$  to  $61.5\pm 2.7$   
291 Bq/L) (Figure 8). Such gap between HTO and OBT contents, reaching in some cases one order of magnitude,  
292 univocally testify additional non-nuclear sources of tritium in the River. These additional sources associated with  
293 watchmaking workshops installed on the watersheds of the Upper Rhone in the middle of the last century were  
294 already widely related in the literature ([Jean-Baptiste et al., 2007](#); [Jean-Baptiste et al., 2019](#); [Eyrolle et al., 2018](#)). No  
295 clear trend can be drawn for OBT contents in suspended sediments from the data set acquired over the 2008-2018  
296 period in this part of the River, due to both the high variability of OBT contents and the short period of time  
297 available.

298 Since the beginning of the 90's when society started to act for environmental protection and limitation of  
299 anthropic pressures, the contents of numerous pollutants, including trace metals, persistent organic substances  
300 and radionuclides from the nuclear industry, significantly decreased in various environmental compartments (e.g.  
301 [Desmet et al., 2012](#); [Ferrand et al., 2012](#); [Grosbois et al., 2012](#)). Resiliency of the Rhone River face to  
302 anthropogenic radionuclides would depend on several parameters such as their radioactive decay period, their  
303 propensity to fix onto particles, their origin and the capacity of the river system to export sediments.

### 304 4.3. Radionuclide contents in filtered waters and trajectories

#### 305 4.3.1. Naturally occurring radionuclides

306 As observed for suspended sediments,  $^{40}\text{K}$  and the different affiliated elements of the chains of  $^{238}\text{U}$  and  $^{232}\text{Th}$ , such  
307 as  $^{234\text{m}}\text{Pa}$  and  $^{228}\text{Ac}$ , make up the major part of the radioactivity of natural origin in filtered waters ( $<0.45\mu\text{m}$ ) of the  
308 Rhone River (Figure 4). The  $^{40}\text{K}$  contents in the filtered waters show low seasonal variations, with minima in  
309 summer ( $0.04\pm 0.02$  Bq/L) and maxima in winter ( $0.06\pm 0.02$  Bq/L). This seasonal variability, nonetheless out of  
310 phase by about 3 months with that of suspended sediments, most probably reflects natural processes such as soil  
311 leaching and water mass cycling and dilution.

312 The  $^7\text{Be}$  is present in significantly lower and more variable concentrations than those of telluric origin. The  $^7\text{Be}$  is  
313 mainly associated with particles as testified by its high  $K_d$  value (Table 1). As previously described,  $^7\text{Be}$  contents in  
314 waters depends to a great extent on the age of the masses of water in transit and of the occurrence of  
315 precipitations on the watershed. Thus, depending on climatic forcing,  $^7\text{Be}$  contents may extend over more than  
316 two orders of magnitude as previously reported for suspended sediments.

317 Sodium is widely present in the environment mainly as highly mobile dissolved species. The  $^{22}\text{Na}$  ( $T_{1/2}=2.6\text{y}$ ) is a  
318 cosmogenic radionuclide which is not detected in suspended sediments. Its contents in filtered waters are  
319 constant over years, without any significant seasonal variation, and are about one order or magnitude below those  
320 of other radionuclides of natural origin (Figure 4).

321 As underlined for suspended sediments, concentrations in radionuclides of natural origin in filtered water are  
322 generally stable in time, at the inter-annual scale.

#### 323 4.3.2. Anthropogenic radionuclides

324 With the exception of tritium ( $^3\text{H}$ ), concentrations in anthropogenic radionuclides are significantly lower than  
325 those of natural radionuclides, most of them by several orders of magnitude (Figure 4). Tritium, of which 95% is of  
326 anthropic origin in the Rhone River (Eyrolle et al., 2013; Eyrolle-Boyer et al., 2015a), is the preponderant  
327 radionuclide in filtered waters of the river since decades. Over 2006-2018, tritium contents in time integrated  
328 water samples (one month) ranged at least one order of magnitude, from  $1.0\pm 0.7$  Bq/L to  $61.5\pm 2.7$  Bq/L, with a

329 mean value of  $6.0 \pm 5.4$  Bq/L. Daily samplings performed in 2013, from mid of January to the end of April, underline  
330 the amplitude of intra-monthly variabilities of tritium contents due to the non-continuous liquid discharges from  
331 nuclear industries (ranging from  $1.0 \pm 0.7$  Bq/L to  $21.5 \pm 2.3$  Bq/L).

332 Besides tritium,  $^{90}\text{Sr} > ^{137}\text{Cs} > ^{60}\text{Co}$  show the highest concentrations. The  $^{90}\text{Sr}$  contents in filtered waters are mainly  
333 due to the low  $K_d$  value of this element ( $550 \pm 90$  L/kg). The  $^{90}\text{Sr}$  contents were almost stable over the studied  
334 period, ranging from  $0.60 \pm 0.1 \cdot 10^{-3}$  Bq/L to  $0.73 \pm 0.03 \cdot 10^{-2}$  Bq/L over 2002-2018 (mean value  $0.002 \pm 0.001$  Bq/L).

335 In 2018,  $^{137}\text{Cs}$  and  $^{60}\text{Co}$  contents ranged from  $0.055 \pm 0.008 \cdot 10^{-3}$  Bq/L to  $0.28 \pm 0.03 \cdot 10^{-3}$  Bq/L and from  $0.017 \pm 0.004$   
336  $10^{-3}$  Bq/L to  $0.037 \pm 0.018 \cdot 10^{-3}$  Bq/L, respectively. Since the beginning of the 2000s, contents of these latter  
337 radionuclides have decreased by around a factor of 4 as closely recorded for suspended sediments.

338 The  $^{58}\text{Co}$ ,  $^{124,125}\text{Sb}$  and  $^{131}\text{I}$  were not detected in any of the filtered water samples since 2012. The  $^{239+240}\text{Pu}$ ,  $^{238}\text{Pu}$ ,  
339  $^{241}\text{Am}$  and  $^{244}\text{Cm}$  contents are between one and more than three orders of magnitude below the range of contents  
340 observed for  $^{90}\text{Sr}$ ,  $^{137}\text{Cs}$  and  $^{60}\text{Co}$ . They do not show any significant decrease over the monitoring period (2004-  
341 2018), except for  $^{238}\text{Pu}$  whose contents would decrease by one order of magnitude over this period. For this latter  
342 radionuclide, EP assessment based on this time series appears to be quite similar to those calculated for  $^{137}\text{Cs}$  and  
343  $^{60}\text{Co}$  either for suspended sediments or filtered waters, i.e. 6 years. This reinforce that all these anthropogenic  
344 radionuclides originate from a predominant single source, i.e. industrial releases.

#### 345 4.4. Comparison to regional referential backgrounds

346 Excess contents due to anthropic pressures can be addressed by using referential background values. Works  
347 related to enrichment factors or geo-accumulation index characterization referring to referential backgrounds are  
348 widely reported in the literature for many contaminants (e.g. [Salomons W. and Forstner, 1984](#); [Global](#)  
349 [Investigation of Pollution in the Marine Environment, 1999](#); [Feng et al., 2011](#); [Ferrand et al., 2012](#); [Barbieri, 2016](#)).  
350 As for many other trace elements, e.g. trace metals, referential backgrounds for naturally occurring or artificially  
351 produced radionuclides are expected to vary over a wide range of values at the regional scale ([Leroux, 2007](#);  
352 [Eyrolle et al., 2008](#)). Among many environmental parameters that can be involved in such variability soil type in the  
353 catchment, soil erosion and the amount of atmospheric fallout from past nuclear tests and the Chernobyl accident



354 would be the predominant ones (Zebracki et al., 2013a,b). Finally referential background values, i.e. addressing  
355 pre-anthropogenic pressure levels, are needed for environmental resiliency assessment.

356 The Hérault and Orb coastal rivers (Figure 1) were used as regional referential systems in order to assess the  
357 impact of anthropogenic pressures exerted by nuclear industries located along the Rhone valley on suspended  
358 sediments and filtered waters transported at the lower part of the Rhone River.

359 Our results show that mean contents of natural radionuclides from telluric origin ( $^{238}\text{Ac}$ ,  $^{234}\text{Pa}$ ,  $^{40}\text{K}$ ) recorded in  
360 suspended sediments from Orb and Hérault rivers are close to those characterizing the Rhone River even though  
361 inter-annual variation, expressed by standard deviation (SD), can be observed (Table 2). The  $^7\text{Be}$  contents in the  
362 suspended sediments of Orb and Hérault rivers show high inter-annual variabilities ( $\text{SD}>50\%$ ) nevertheless falling  
363 within the ranges of variation registered for the Rhone River.

364 Naturally occurring radionuclide contents in river systems strongly depend on hydrology, in particular the origin of  
365 water and sediment deliveries from the soils in the catchments and on the quality of materials transported  
366 (Leroux, 2007). Our results show that at the studied regional scale, although including contrasting watersheds  
367 spreading over Alps, Cevennes or Pyrenees mountainous areas, all these parameters do not significantly influence  
368 mean natural radionuclide contents.

369 These results suggest that for naturally occurring radionuclides, geochemical heterogeneity would most generally  
370 dominate anthropogenic pressures associated to nuclear fuel cycle exploitation in the Rhone valley. These results do  
371 not exclude that excess contents of these radionuclides could be reached at more local scales.

372 For anthropogenic radionuclides expected in regional rivers ( $^{137}\text{Cs}$ ,  $^{90}\text{Sr}$  and transuranium elements  $^{238}\text{Pu}$ ,  $^{239+240}\text{Pu}$ ,  
373  $^{241}\text{Am}$ ) the contents observed in the Hérault River were similar to those measured in the lower part of the Rhone  
374 River. However for most of these radionuclides, contents recorded in the Orb River were higher than those found  
375 in the Rhone River. For example, the concentrations in  $^{239+240}\text{Pu}$  measured between 2011 and 2017 in the  
376 suspended sediments of the Orb River were between 2 and 10 times higher than the concentrations in  $^{239+240}\text{Pu}$   
377 recorded in the lower part of the Rhone. Similar differences between the Orb and the lower part of the Rhone  
378 were also observed for  $^{90}\text{Sr}$ . For these latter elements, the differences in concentrations at this regional scale can  
379 be explained either by the relative magnitude of the initial atmospheric deposits resulting from nuclear tests

380 and/or the Chernobyl accident or by contrasting erosion rates of the soils of the watersheds (Renaud et al., 2004).

381 Part of the watershed of the Orb drains the massif of the Montagne Noire, an area of known remanence of  
382 atmospheric fallout from nuclear testings (Leroux, 2007).

383 These results suggest that for anthropogenic radionuclides deposited by atmospheric fallout from past nuclear  
384 tests and the Chernobyl accident, geo-climatic heterogeneity at the studied regional scale would currently  
385 dominate anthropic pressures associated to nuclear fuel cycle exploitation in the Rhone valley.

386 As expected OBT contents in the sediments of Orb and Hérault rivers ( $<0.1 \text{ Bq/kg}_{\text{dry}}$ ;  $< 1 \text{ Bq/L}_{\text{cw}}$ ) are much lower  
387 than those observed in the downstream part of the Rhone River ( $0.5\pm 0.4 \text{ Bq/kg}_{\text{dry}}$ ;  $30\pm 18 \text{ Bq/L}_{\text{cw}}$ ) testifying the  
388 significant impact of the watchmaking industries on this river system, as previously described.

389 In filtered waters, similar conclusions as those highlighted for suspended sediments can be drawn for naturally  
390 occurring radionuclides. Natural radionuclides from telluric origin ( $^{238}\text{Ac}$ ,  $^{234}\text{Pa}$ ,  $^{40}\text{K}$ ) and  $^7\text{Be}$  recorded in filtered  
391 waters from the Rhone River show close contents to those characterizing Orb and Hérault rivers. These results  
392 underline that at the lower part of the Rhone River there is no significant impact onto the water resource quality  
393 due to the use of natural radionuclides of U/Th chains, involved in the nuclear fuel cycle.

394 For  $^{137}\text{Cs}$ ,  $^{90}\text{Sr}$  and transuranium elements ( $^{238}\text{Pu}$ ,  $^{239+240}\text{Pu}$ ,  $^{241}\text{Am}$ ), all the contents are close to referential values  
395 except for  $^{238}\text{Pu}$  and  $^{241}\text{Am}$  which are at least one order of magnitude higher in the downstream part of the Rhone  
396 River waters. These gaps which were not observed for suspended sediments most probably testify the direct  
397 impact of nuclear industry releases onto the water resource.

398 All other radionuclides specifically released by the nuclear industries located along the Rhone valley, i.e.,  $^{60}\text{Co}$ ,  
399  $^{54}\text{Mn}$ ,  $^{110\text{m}}\text{Ag}$ , were obviously not detected neither in sediments nor filtered waters of referential river systems.

400 Finally, tritium contents in the Rhone River waters are significantly higher by more than one order of magnitude  
401 than in the Orb and Hérault Rivers, underlying the significant impact from nuclear industries in the Rhone River.

## 402 5. Conclusions

403 The SORA station has been performing continuous sampling of large water volumes at the downstream part of the  
404 Rhone River for almost twenty years, in order to monitor the contents of natural and anthropogenic radionuclides

405 at trace levels. Most plutonium, americium, cesium, cobalt, silver, beryllium and actinium deliveries towards the  
406 marine environment (>60%) are associated with solid particles due to the strong affinity of these elements with  
407 suspended sediments (high Kd values). In contrast, sodium, tritium, antimony and strontium isotopes are mainly  
408 exported as dissolved species (>90%) due to their low affinity with particles (low Kd values).

409 Naturally occurring radionuclides are the most abundant in suspended sediments while in filtered waters tritium  
410 contents are at least two order of magnitude higher than those of all other radionuclides.

411 The concentrations of the naturally occurring are almost constant at a multi-year scale, despite the fact that an  
412 intra-annual variability is often observed for several of these elements most probably in relation to the river's  
413 hydrology.

414 The  $^{40}\text{K}$  contents seem to have decreased towards geochemical backgrounds in the lower Rhone River suggesting  
415 that anthropic pressures from potassium-based fertilizer uses in the Rhone basin have obviously declined and that  
416 resiliency of the river is reached for this radionuclide.

417 Time series also point to a significant reduction of the concentrations of most of the anthropogenic radionuclides  
418 over the two last decades, except for tritium, organically bound tritium,  $^{90}\text{Sr}$  and transuranium elements suggesting  
419 slow resiliency of the river system for these latter elements considering no change in climatic and anthropic  
420 pressures.

421 Finally, radionuclide contents in suspended sediments exported at the downstream part of the Rhone River are  
422 very close to regional referential backgrounds, except for organically bound tritium which originate from  
423 watchmaking workshops located in upper Rhone watersheds. The contents of most of the anthropogenic  
424 radionuclides specifically released by industries are now at ultra-trace levels and often below the limit of detection  
425 even though high performance analytical procedures are used. In filtered waters only tritium,  $^{241}\text{Am}$  and  $^{238}\text{Pu}$   
426 significantly testify nowadays the anthropic pressures from the nuclear industries.

427 Nowadays, anthropic pressures from exploitation of the nuclear fuel in the Rhone River during more than seventy  
428 years are still distinguishable in suspended sediments and filtered waters at the lower course of the river.  
429 Nevertheless, current contents of radionuclides would suggest that the resiliency of the river regarding this  
430 pollutant family is going on.

431

432 **Acknowledgements**

433 *The authors would like to express their sincere thanks to the Agence de l'Eau Rhône Méditerranée Corse for*  
434 *providing financial support for the SORA station and to the Observatoire des Sédiments du Rhône (OSR) also funded*  
435 *by the Rhône Plan and by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) allocated by the European Union, BRL*  
436 *society (Bas Rhône Languedoc) and the French Agency for Research (ANR TRAJECTOIRE) for additional funding's.*  
437 *Special thanks to F. Giner, D. Mourier, P. Paulat, C. Le Corre, X. Cagnat, M. Galliot, B. Kvizic, S. Thomas, C. Vivien*  
438 *(IRSN) for field samplings, sample treatment and analyses.*

439

440 **References**

441 Abril, J.M., Fraga, E. (1996) Some physical and chemical features of the variability of Kd distribution coefficient for  
442 radionuclides. J. Environ. Radioact. 30-3, 253–270.

443 AFNOR NF EN ISO 9698 (2015) Qualité de l'eau - Détermination de l'activité volumique du tritium – Méthode par  
444 comptage des scintillations en milieu liquide. AFNOR.

445 Antonelli C. (2017) Rapport d'exploitation. Station SORA – Année 2017. RT/PSE-ENV/SEREN/2017-00027.

446 Barbieri M. (2016) The Importance of Enrichment Factor (EF) and Geoaccumulation Index (Igeo) to Evaluate the  
447 Soil Contamination, J Geol Geophys 2016, 5, 1.

448 Boyer, P., Wells, C., Howard B. (2018) Extended Kd distributions for freshwater environment. Journal of  
449 Environmental Radioactivity, 192, pp. 128-142.

450 Bradley SB, Lewin J (1982) Transport of heavy metals on suspended sediments under high flow conditions in a  
451 mineralised region of Wales. Environ Pollut Ser B 4, 257–267.

452 Duan W, He B, Chen Y, Zou S, Wang Y, Nover D, et al. (2018) Identification of long-term trends and seasonality in  
453 high-frequency water quality data from the Yangtze River basin, China, PLoS ONE 13(2), e0188889. doi:  
454 10.1371/journal.pone.0188889. eCollection 2018.

455 Dawson J, Macklin MG (1998) Speciation of heavy metals on suspended sediment under high flow conditions in the  
456 River Aire, West Yorkshire, UK. Hydrol Process 12, 1483–1494.

457 Desmet, M., Mourier, B., Mahler, B.J., Van Metre, P.C., Roux, G., Persat, H., Lefèvre, I., Peretti, A., Chapron, E.,  
458 Simonneau, A., Miège, C., Babut, M. (2012) Spatial and temporal trends in PCBs in sediment along the lower Rhône  
459 River, France. Sci. Total Environ. 433, 189–197.

- 460 Ducros L., Eyrolle F., Della Vedova C., Charmasson S., LeBlanc M., Mayer A., Babic M., Antonelli C., Mourier D.,  
461 Giner F. (2017) Tritium in river waters from French Mediterranean catchments: background levels and variability,  
462 Science of the Total environment, 612, 672-682.
- 463 Duffa C. (2001) – Répartition du plutonium et de l'américium dans l'environnement terrestre de la basse vallée du  
464 Rhône. Thèse de doctorat, Université Aix-Marseille III. 179 p.
- 465 Eyrolle F., Charmasson S. (2001) Distribution of organic carbon, selected stable elements and artificial  
466 radionuclides among dissolved, colloidal and particulate phases in the Rhône River (France): Preliminary results  
467 Journal of Environmental Radioactivity, 55-2, 145-155.
- 468 Eyrolle F., Charmasson S. (2004) Importance of colloids in the transport within the dissolved phase (<450 nm) of  
469 anthropogenic radionuclides from the Rhône river towards the Gulf of Lions (Mediterranean Sea). Journal of  
470 Environmental Radioactivity, 72-3, 273-286.
- 471 Eyrolle F., Gontier G., Claval D., Antonelli C., (2008) Radioactivity levels in major French rivers: summary of  
472 monitoring chronicles acquired over the past thirty years and current status. Journal of Environmental Monitoring,  
473 10, 800-811.
- 474 Eyrolle F., Radakovitch O., Raimbault P., Antonelli C., Ferrand E., Raccasi G., Aubert D., Gurriaran R. (2012) Long  
475 term survey of suspended particles and associated natural and artificial radionuclides transport in the Rhône River.  
476 Journal of Soils and Sediments, 12, 1479-1495.
- 477 Eyrolle-Boyer F., Renaud P., Le Doré F., Tournieux D., Claval D., Blanchet J. F., Antonelli C., Zebracki M., Cossonnet  
478 C., Boulet B., Cagnat X., De Vismes A., Gurriaran R. (2014a) Radiological characteristics of water transport channels  
479 Example of Rhone Languedoc Roussillon regional network, Radioprotection, 49, 2, 123-134.
- 480 Eyrolle-Boyer F., Renaud P., Claval D., Tournieux D., Le Doré F., Blanchet J. F., Loyen J., Antonelli C., Cossonnet C.,  
481 Cagnat X. (2014b) Radiological quality Assessment of the Rhône River filtered waters at its lower course in the  
482 framework of water production for human consumption with historical and regional perspectives,  
483 Radioprotection, 49, 3, 183-193.
- 484 Eyrolle-Boyer F., Boyer P., Claval D., Charmasson S., Cossonnet C. (2014c) Apparent enrichment of organically  
485 bound tritium in rivers explained by the heritage of our past, Journal of Environmental Radioactivity, 136, 162-168.
- 486 Eyrolle-Boyer F., Antonelli C., Renaud Ph., Tournieux D. (2015a) Origins and trend of radionuclides within the  
487 Rhône River over the last decades, Radioprotection, 50, 1, 27-34.
- 488 Eyrolle-Boyer F., Thébault H., Claval D., Calmon P., Zebracki M., Cossonnet C. (2015b) Tritium and <sup>14</sup>C background  
489 levels in pristine aquatic systems and their potential sources of variability, Journal of Environmental Radioactivity,  
490 139, 24-32.
- 491 Eyrolle F., Lepage H., Copard Y., Ducros L., Claval D., Saey L., Cossonnet C., Giner F., Mourier D., (2018) A brief  
492 history of origins and contents of Organically Bound Tritium (OBT) and <sup>14</sup>C in the sediments of the Rhône  
493 watershed, STOTEN, 643, 40-51.

- 494 Feng H, Jiang H, Gao W, Weinstein MP, Zhang Q, et al. (2011) Metal contamination in sediments of the western  
495 Bohai Bay and adjacent estuaries, China. *J Environ Manag* 92, 1185-1197.
- 496 Ferrand E., Eyrolle F., Radakovitch O., Provansal M., Dufour S., Vella C., Raccasi G. and Gurriaran R. (2012)  
497 Historical levels of heavy metals and artificial radionuclides reconstructed from overbank sediment records in  
498 lower Rhône River (South - East France), *Geochemica and Cosmochimica Acta*, special Issue on Environmental  
499 Records of Anthropogenic Impacts, 82, 163-182.
- 500 Global Investigation of Pollution in the Marine Environment (1999) *Guidance on Assessment of Sediment Quality*.  
501 IOCeUNEPeIMO.
- 502 Ferrand E., Eyrolle F., Radakovitch O., Provansal M., Dufour S., Vella C., Raccasi G. and Gurriaran R., 2012, Historical  
503 levels of heavy metals and artificial radionuclides reconstructed from overbank sediment records in Lower part of  
504 the Rhone River (South - East France), *Geochemica and Cosmochimica Acta*, special Issue on Environmental  
505 Records of Anthropogenic Impacts, 82, 163-182.
- 506 Filella M., Belzile N., Chen Y.W. (2002) - Antimony in the environment: a review focused on natural waters. I.  
507 Occurrence, *Earth Science Review*, 57, 125-176.
- 508 Ghashghaie M., Ostad-Ali-Askari K., Eslamian S., Singh P.V. (2018) Application of Time Series Modeling to Study  
509 River Water Quality, *American Journal of Engineering and Applied Sciences*, DOI: 10.3844/ajeassp.2018.574.585.
- 510 Gil-Díaz T., Schäfer J., Keller V., Eiche E., Dutruch L., Mößner C., Lenz M., Eyrolle F. (2020) Tellurium and selenium  
511 sorption kinetics and solid fractionation under contrasting estuarine salinity and turbidity conditions, *Chemical*  
512 *Geology*, 532, 119370.
- 513 Grosbois C., Meybeck M., Lestel L., Moatar F., Lefèvre I. (2012) Severe and contrasted polymetallic contamination  
514 patterns (1900–2009) in the Loire River sediments (France), *Science of the Total Environment*, 435-436, 290-305.
- 515 Grosbois C., A. Coynel, F. Eyrolle-Boyer, C. Lemarchand, C. Mouneyrac, L. Poirier (2016) Micropolluants  
516 métalliques, organiques et radionucléides : depuis les eaux et sédiments vers le biote La radioactivité des eaux de  
517 la Loire, Chapitre 8, dans Moatar, F., Dupond N. 2016. *La Loire fluviale et estuarienne: un milieu en évolution*.  
518 2016. Ed. Quae, ISBN: 978-2-7592-2401-2; ISSN: 1777-4624.
- 519 Hirose K., Povinec P. (2015) Sources of plutonium in the atmosphere and stratosphere-troposphere mixing,  
520 *Scientific Reports*, DOI: 10.1038/srep15707.
- 521 IAEA (2012) *Environmental Modelling for radiation Safety (EMRAS)*. A summary report of the results of the EMRAS  
522 Programme (2003-2007). Vol. 1678 (IAEA-TECDOC, 2012).
- 523 IRSN (2013) *Constat radiologique Vallée du Rhône. Rapport final relatif au milieu Aquatique*, Rapport PRP-  
524 ENV/SESURE/2013-37.
- 525 Jean-Baptiste Ph., Baumier D., Clavel B. (2007) The distribution of tritium in the terrestrial and aquatic  
526 environments of the Crey-Malville nuclear power plant (2002-2005), *Journal of Environmental Radioactivity*, 94, 2,  
527 107-118.

- 528 Jean-Baptiste, P. et al. (2019) Organically bound tritium (OBT) and carbon-14 accumulation in the sediments off the  
529 mouth of the Rhône river. *Environ. Earth Sci.* 78(3), 78.
- 530 Krejci, K., Zeller, A. (1979) Tritium pollution in the Swiss luminous compound industry. In: *Behaviour of Tritium in*  
531 *the Environment*, IAEA Proceedings Series, IAEA-SM-232/11, Vienna, pp. 65-77.
- 532 Laubenstein M., Magaldi D. (2008) Natural radioactivity of some red Mediterranean soils. *Catena*, 76, 22-26.
- 533 Le Roux G. (2007) Radionucléides naturels en France. Approche géochimique de la variabilité des radionucléides  
534 naturels d'origine tellurique (40K et chaînes U-Th) dans les sols et sédiments fluviaux, Rapport IRSN/DEI/SESURE  
535 2007-42.
- 536 Ludwig W., Dumont E., Meybeck M., Heussner S. (2009) River discharges of water and nutrients to the  
537 Mediterranean and Black Sea: Major S.drivers for ecosystem changes during past and future decades? *Progress in*  
538 *Oceanography*, 80, 199-217.
- 539 Maringer F. G., Hrachowitz V., Baumgartner M., Weilner A., Seidel S. C. (2009) Long-term monitoring of the  
540 Danube river-Sampling techniques, radionuclide metrology and radioecological assessment. *Applied radiation and*  
541 *isotopes : including data, instrumentation and methods for use in agriculture, industry and medicine.* 67. 894-900.
- 542 Masson O., Eyrolle F., Antonelli C., Boullier V. (2004) Station observatoire « Rhône aval »-Réseau OPERA-Bilan  
543 2001-2003, rapport IRSN/DEI/SESURE/LERCM-2004-05.
- 544 Meybeck M., Lestel L., Carré C., Bouleau G., Garnier J., Mouchel J. M. (2018) Trajectories of River Chemical  
545 Quality Issues over the Longue Durée: The Seine River (1900s-2010), *Environmental Science and Pollution*  
546 *Research*, Springer Verlag, 25 (24), 23468-23484.
- 547 Molle F. , Wester P. (2009) *River Basin Trajectories: Societies, Environments and Development*, Edited by François  
548 Molle and Philippus Wester.
- 549 Morereau A., Lepage H., Claval D., Cossonnet C., Mourier B., Winiarski T., Ambrosi J. P., Eyrolle F., Technogenic  
550 tritium contamination from watchmaking industry and its fate in sediment cores of the Rhône River (France), in  
551 prep.
- 552 NF ISO 18589-5 May 2009 Measurements of radioactivity in the environment - Soil - Part 5 : measurement of  
553 strontium 90.
- 554 Ottlé, C., Etchevers, P., Golaz, et al. (2001) Hydro-meteorological modelling of the Rhône Basin: general  
555 presentation and objectives. *Phys. Chem. Earth, (B)* 26 (5-6), 443-453.
- 556 Palms J., Patrick R., Kreeger D., Harris C. (2007) 25-y study of radionuclide monitoring with terrestrial and aquatic  
557 biomonitors, *Health Phys.*, 92(3):219-25.
- 558 Panagiotopoulos C., Sempéré R., Para J., Raimbault P., Rabouille C., Charrière B. (2012) The composition and flux  
559 of particulate and dissolved carbohydrates from the Rhone River into the Mediterranean Sea. *Biogeosciences*, 9,  
560 1827-1844.
- 561 Pardé M. (1925) *Le régime du Rhône. Etude hydrologique*. Thesis, University of Grenoble, France, 887 pp.

- 562 Perkins R. W., Thomas C. W. (1980) *Worldwide Fallout*, p. 53-82 in W. C. Hanson editor. "Transuranic elements in  
563 the environment", U.S. DOE, USA.
- 564 Pont D. (1997) Les débits solides du Rhône à proximité de son embouchure: données récentes (1994-1995). *Revue*  
565 *de Géographie de Lyon* 72-1, 23–43.
- 566 Renaud P., Métivier J.M., Castellier J.M., Pourcelot L., Louvat D. (2004) Cartographie des dépôts de <sup>137</sup>Cs en mai  
567 1986 sur l'ensemble du territoire français métropolitain, *Radioprotection*, 39(1), 23-38.
- 568 Rolland B. (2006) Transfert des radionucléides artificiels par voie fluviale : conséquences sur les stocks  
569 sédimentaires rhodaniens et les exports vers la Méditerranée. Thèse, Université Paul Cézanne d'Aix-Marseille,  
570 243p.
- 571 Salomons W. and Forstner U. (1984) *Metals in the Hydrocycle*. Sinpringer, Berlin.
- 572 Schleichert U. (1975) Annual variation of the heavy metal contents of suspended sediments in the Rhine River at  
573 Koblenz. *Dtsch Gewässerkd Mitt* 19, 150–157.
- 574 Thompson T.M. (1988) Environmental monitoring for radionuclides in marine ecosystems; Are species other than  
575 man protected adequately? *J. Environ. Radioactivity* 7, 275-283.
- 576 Topçuoğlu S. , Ergül H.A., Belivermiş M., Kılıç O. (2010) Monitoring of radionuclide concentrations in marine algae, mussel  
577 and sediment samples from the Turkish marine environment during the period of 2001-2009 J. *Black Sea/Mediterranean*  
578 *Environment* Vol. 16(3): 285-293.
- 579 Zebracki M., Eyrolle F., Cagnat X., Antonelli C., De Vismes-Ott A., Boullier V. (2013a) Characterization of naturally  
580 occurring radionuclides in the Lower part of the Rhone River waters (France), preliminary results from suspended  
581 sediments monitoring, *Water Resources Management VII, WIT Transactions on Ecology and the Environment*, 171,  
582 235-245.
- 583 Zebracki M., Eyrolle-Boyer F., De Vismes-Ott A., Antonelli C., Xavier Cagna X., Boullier V. (2013b) Radionuclide  
584 contents in suspended sediments in relation to the flood types in the Lower part of the Rhone River, *Procedia*  
585 *Earth and Planetary Science*, 7, 936-939.
- 586 Buesseler K., Dai M., Aoyama M., Benitez-Nelson C., Charmasson S., Higley K., Maderich V., Masqué P., Morris P.J.,  
587 Oughton D., Smith J.N. (2017) Fukushima Daiichi–Derived Radionuclides in the Ocean: Transport, Fate, and  
588 Impacts, *Annual Review of Marine Science*, 9, 173-203.
- 589

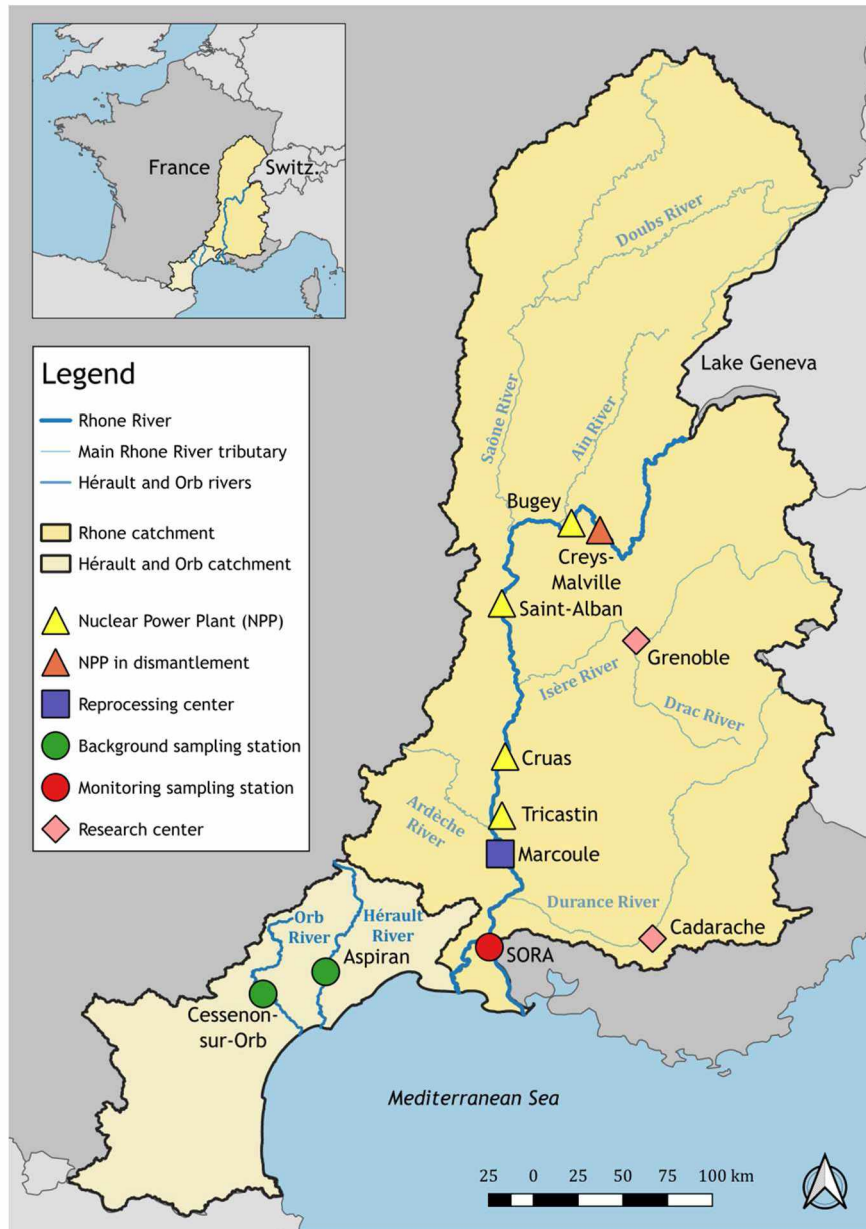


1 Radionuclides in waters and suspended sediments in the Rhone River (France) - Current  
2 contents, anthropic pressures and trajectories

3

4 Figures and tables

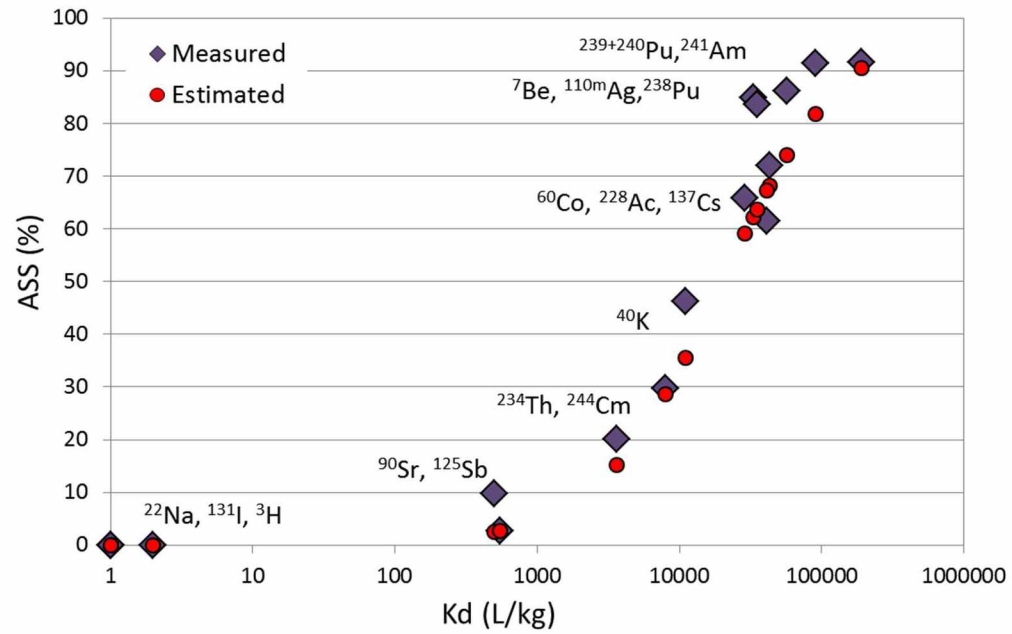
5



6

7

Figure 1: Sampling stations on the Rhone, Orb and Hérault rivers and location of nuclear installations.



8

9 Figure 2: Measured\* and estimated amounts of radionuclides exported by suspended sediments (ASS, in %) related to their apparent  
 10 distribution coefficient\*\* (Kd, in L/kg); \* from Antonelli (2017): data set acquired in 2016 at the SORA monitoring sampling station  
 11 (Rhone River). \*\* From data set acquired from 2002-2018 at the SORA monitoring sampling station (Rhone River).

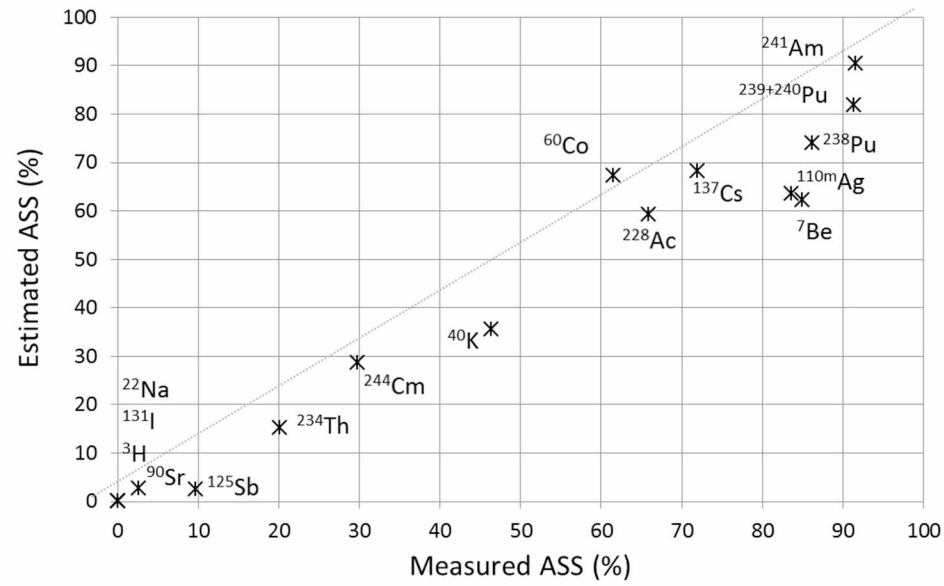
12

13

14

15

16

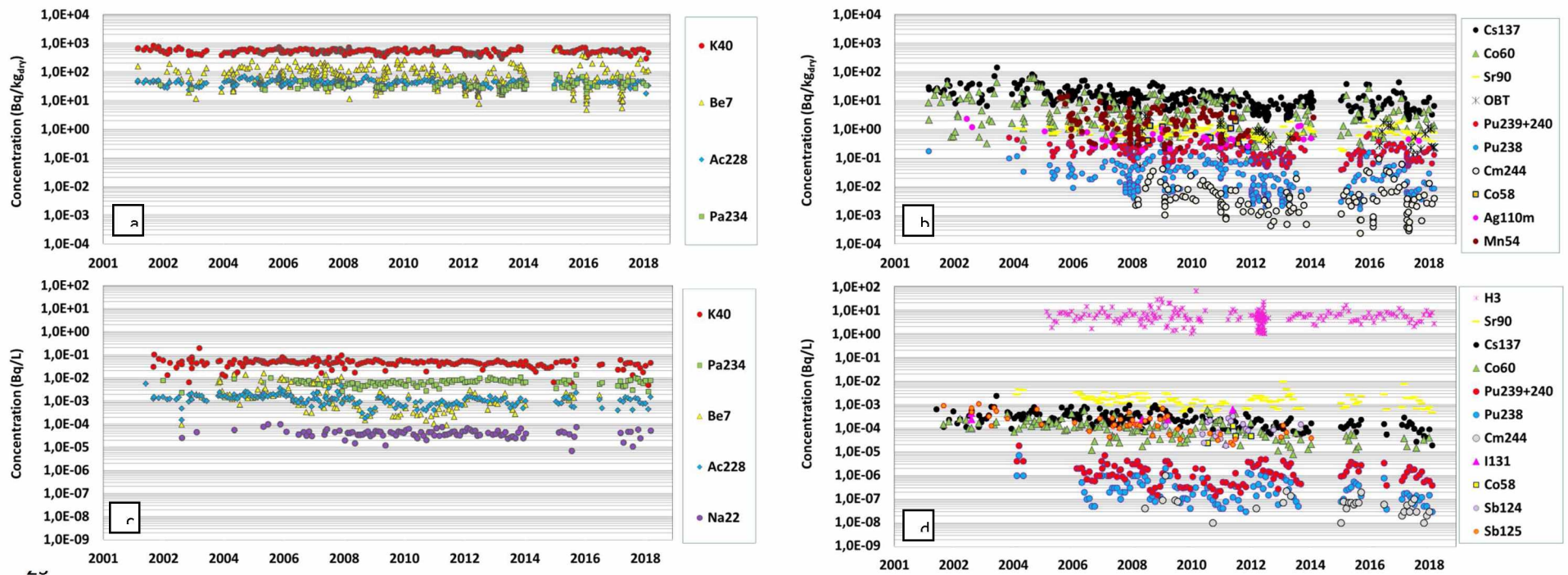


17

18 Figure 3: Amounts of radionuclides exported by suspended sediments (ASS, in %): calculations from mean apparent distribution  
 19 coefficient ( $K_d$ , in L/kg) and mean suspended matters content (50 mg/L) - Estimated ASS vs direct measurements from Antonelli 2017 -  
 20 Measured ASS.

21

22



24 Figure 4: Time series of radionuclide contents in suspended sediments (a, b), in Bq/kg<sub>dry</sub> and filtered waters (c, d), in Bq/L measured  
 25 at the SORA monitoring sampling station (Rhône River) over 2002-2018 ; Naturally occurring radionuclide contents in a, c and artificial  
 26 radionuclide contents in b,d.

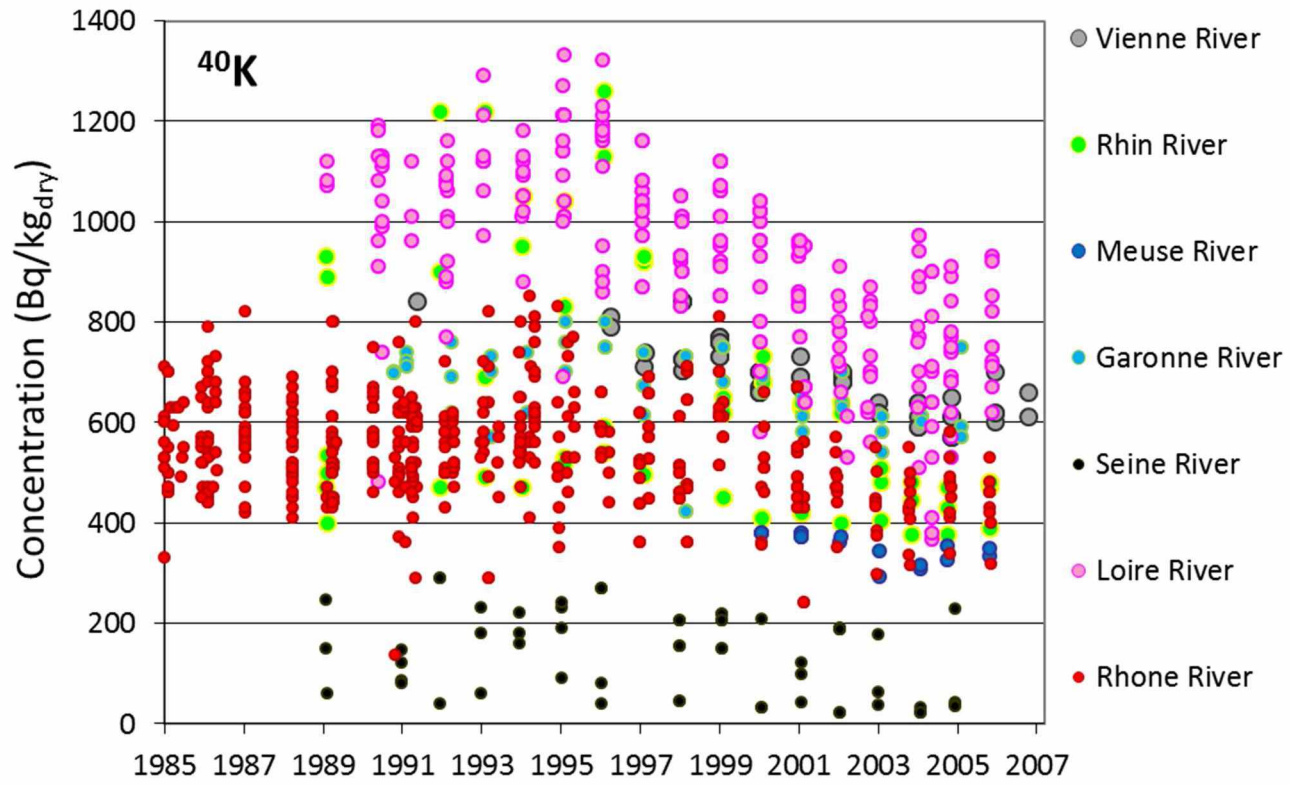
27

28

29

30

31



32

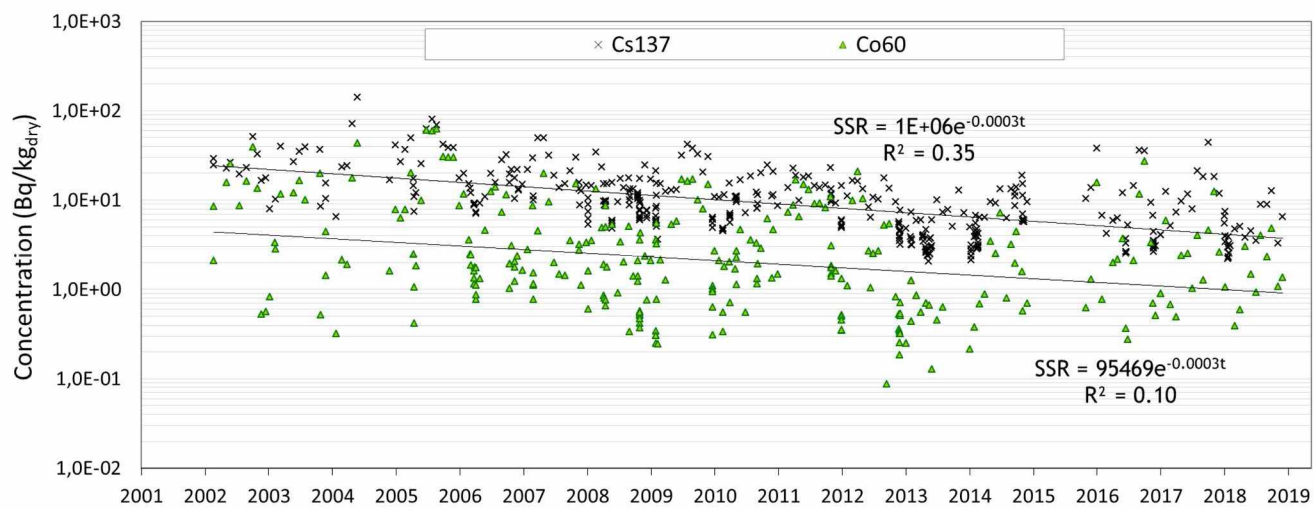
33

Figure 5: Time series of  $^{40}\text{K}$  contents in the suspended sediments of French large rivers (according to [Eyrolle-Boyer, 2016](#)).

34

35

36

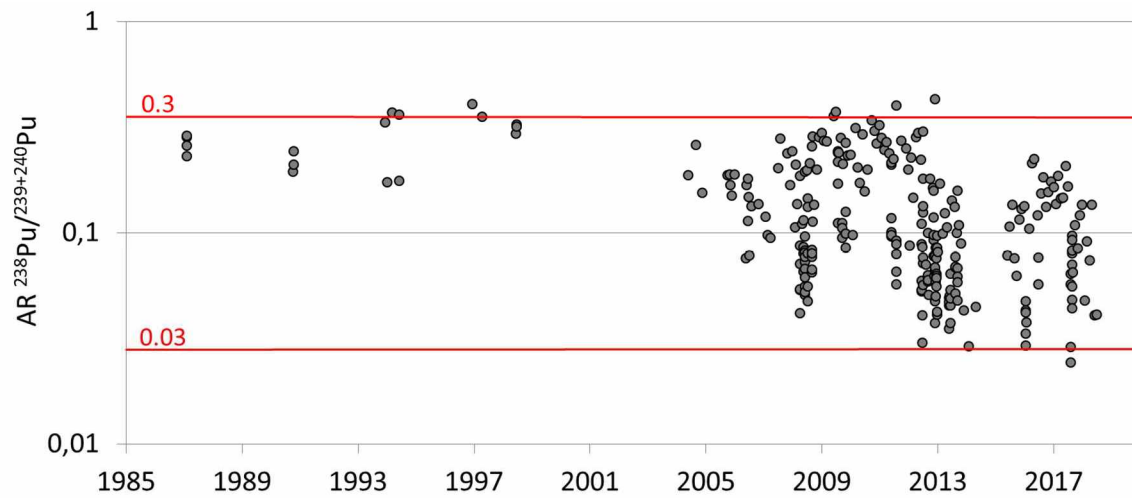


37

38 Figure 6: Trends of  $^{137}\text{Cs}$  and  $^{60}\text{Co}$  contents in suspended sediments; SORA monitoring sampling station (2002-2018), Rhone River  
 39 (France).

40

41

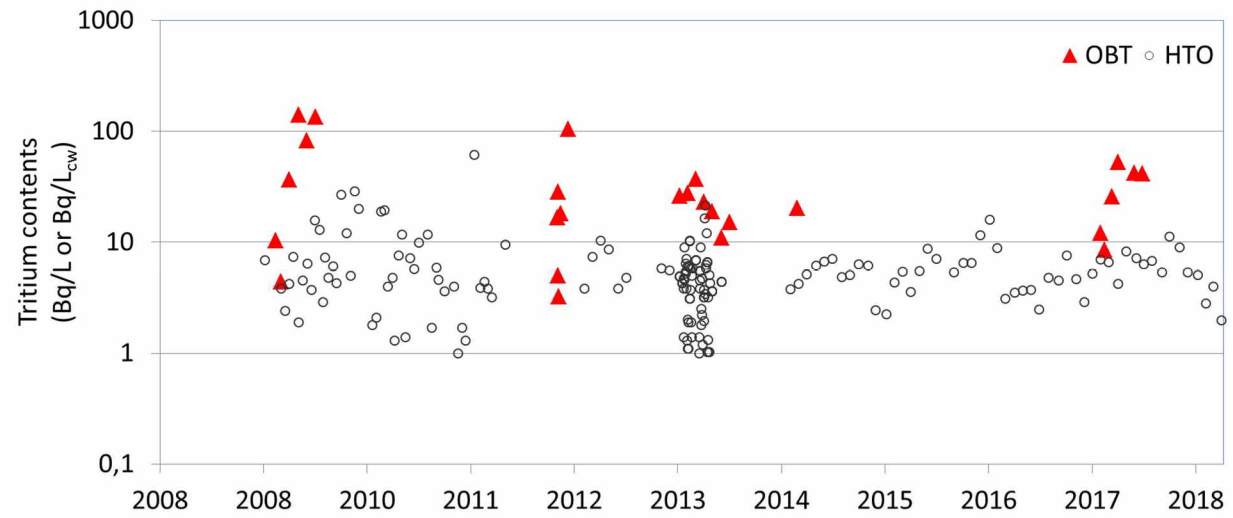


42

43 Figure 7: Time series of  $^{238}\text{Pu}/^{239+240}\text{Pu}$  activity ratios (AR) in the suspended sediments collected in the lower Rhone River between 1987  
 44 and 2018 (SORA station from 2004 to 2018). The red lines correspond to theoretical AR values for discharges from the Marcoule spent  
 45 fuel reprocessing plant (AR=0.3) and for the soils of the watershed (AR=0.03).

46





47

48

Figure 8: Time series of organically bound tritium contents (OBT, in Bq/L<sub>cw</sub>) and of free tritium contents (HTO, in Bq/L).

49

50

51

52

53

54

55

56

57

58

59 Table 1 - Mean apparent distribution coefficient, Kd in L/kg<sub>dry</sub> in the lower Rhone River; SORA station (2002-2018) and \*IAEA Referential  
60 Kd distributions (Boyer et al., 2018).

Kd (L/kg)	Downstream Rhone River	IAEA Referential Kd Distributions*		
		GM	5%	95%
Américium 241	191 000 ± 7 000 (n=211)	7.94E+04	3.90E+03	1.62E+06
Plutonium 239,240	90 000 ± 11 000 (n=92)	1.47E+05	1.94E+03	1.11E+07
Plutonium 238	57 000 ± 7 000 (n=82)	1.47E+05	1.94E+03	1.11E+07
Plomb 210	53 000 ± 1 200 (n=204)	2.63E+05	6.66E+04	1.04E+06
Césium 137	43 000 ± 11 000 (n=218)	1.35E+05	2.64E+04	6.69E+05
Cobalt 60	41 000 ± 11 000 (n=76)	4.43E+04	1.00E+04	1.96E+05
Thorium 228	37 000 ± 7 000 (n=182)	1.52E+05	2.64E+04	8.76E+05
Argent 110m	35 000 ± 5 000 (n=38)	4.85E+05		
Béryllium 7	33 000 ± 11 000 (n=183)	3.87E+04	8.06E+03	1.85E+05
Actinium 228	29 000 ± 8 000 (n=222)			
Manganese 54	23 000 ± 1000 (n=104)	7.21E+04	1.09E+04	4.76E+05
Potassium 40	11 000 ± 2 000 (n=225)	1.93E+03	5.66E+02	6.95E+03
Curium 244	8 000 ± 1 000 (n=46)	3.26E+04	8.96E+03	1.18E+05
Protactinium 234	6 100 ± 1 600 (n=222)	1.21E+05	4.73E+04	3.11E+05
Thorium 232	5 000 ± 900 (n=132)	1.52E+05	2.64E+04	8.76E+05
Thorium 230	3 700 ± 800 (n=66)	1.52E+05	2.64E+04	8.76E+05
Thorium 234	3 600 ± 1 000 (n=206)	1.52E+05	2.64E+04	8.76E+05
Radium 226	1 700 ± 300 (n=195)	5.21E+03	9.79E+02	2.77E+04
Radium 228	1 600 ± 300 (n=105)	5.21E+03	9.79E+02	2.77E+04
Uranium 234	1 400 ± 300 (n=35)	1.19E+04	6.94E+02	2.04E+05
Uranium 238	1 400 ± 300 (n=195)	1.19E+04	6.94E+02	2.04E+05
Antimoine 125	500 ± 100 (n=93)	8.14E+03	1.65E+03	4.01E+04
Strontium 90	550 ± 90 (n=104)	2.96E+03	3.31E+02	2.65E+04
Iode 131	<1	3.32E+03	2.06E+03	5.36E+03
Sodium 22	<1	1.53E+03	8.01E+02	2.92E+03

61

62

63 Table 2: Mean contents of main naturally occurring and artificial radionuclides in suspended sediments and filtered waters of the  
 64 Hérault and Orb coastal rivers (2011-201) and at the downstream part of the Rhone River (2018); In bold, excess contents referring to  
 65 referential regional backgrounds; nd: not determined; \* in Bq/L<sub>cw</sub>; SD : Standard Deviation.

	Referential Regional Background (2011-2018)								Nuclearized River (2018)			
	Hérault River				Orb River				Lower Rhone River			
	SS (Bq/kg <sub>dry</sub> )		Filtered water (Bq/L)		SS (Bq/kg <sub>dry</sub> )		Filtered water (Bq/L)		SS (Bq/kg <sub>dry</sub> )		Filtered water (Bq/L)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<b>H3</b>	nd		0.7	0.1			0.2	0.1	nd		<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>OBT</b>	0.05	0.03	nd	-	0.07	0.04	nd	-	<b>0.5</b>	<b>0.4</b>	nd	-
<b>OBT*</b>	0.7	0.4	nd	-	0.9	0.5	nd	-	<b>30</b>	<b>18</b>	nd	-
<b>K40</b>	656	50	0.04	0.01	618	23	0.04	0.01	510	81	0.04	0.01
<b>Be7</b>	62	33	0.002	0.001	81	25	0.004	0.001	61	33	0.002	0.001
<b>Pa234</b>	47	11	0.02	0.01	46	9	0.006	0.002	43	14	0.006	0.003
<b>Ac228</b>	45	8	0.003	0.001	42	5	0.001	0.001	41	6	0.001	0.001
<b>Cs137</b>	6	1	0.0001	0.0001	20	4	0.0001	0.0001	10	4	0.0002	0.0001
<b>Sr90</b>	0.5	0.1	0.002	0.001	2,5	0.5	0.002	0.001	0.6	0.1	0.003	0.001
<b>Na22</b>	nd		0.00003	0.00001	-	-	0.00003	0.00001	nd	-	0.00004	0.00001
<b>Pu239+240</b>	0.08	0.03	0.0000007	0.0000001	0,7	0.1	0.0000011	0.0000005	0.2	0.1	0.0000012	0.0000008
<b>Pu238</b>	0.003	0.001	< 0.0000001	-	0.03	0.01	< 0.0000001	-	0.03	0.02	<b>0.0000003</b>	<b>0.0000001</b>
<b>Am241</b>	0.05	0.01	<0.00000001	-	0.29	0.05	0.00000008	0.00000001	0.1	0.1	<b>0.0000002</b>	<b>0.0000001</b>

66

67

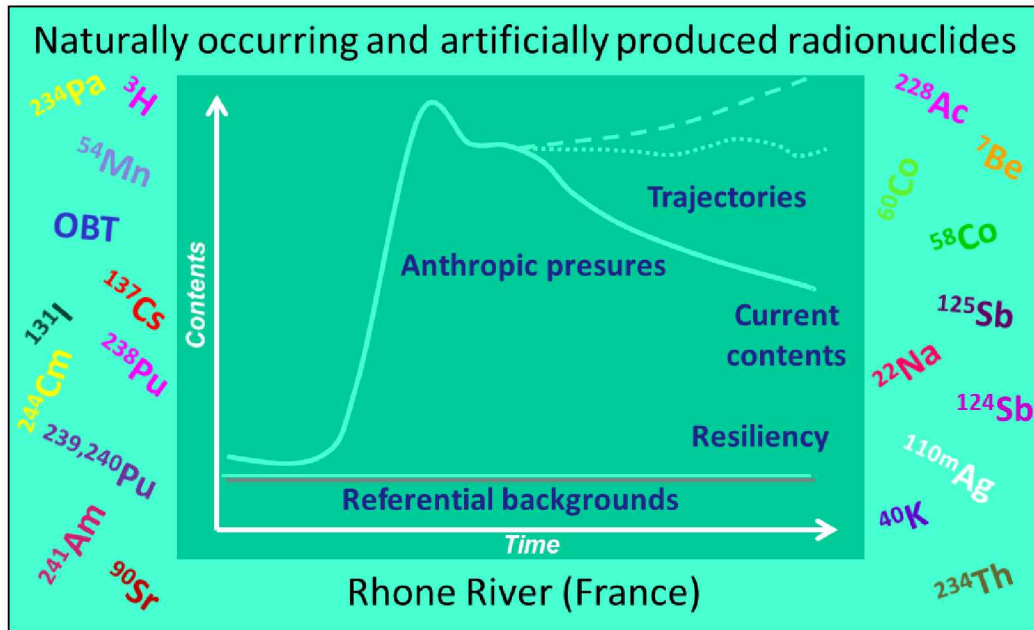
Kd (L/kg)	Downstream Rhone River	IAEA Referential Kd Distributions*		
		IAEA - GM	IAEA - 5%	IAEA - 95%
Américium 241	191 000 ± 7 000 (n=211)	7,94E+04	3,90E+03	1,62E+06
Plutonium 239,240	90 000 ± 11 000 (n=92)	1,47E+05	1,94E+03	1,11E+07
Plutonium 238	57 000 ± 7 000 (n=82)	1,47E+05	1,94E+03	1,11E+07
Plomb 210	53 000 ± 1 200 (n=204)	2,63E+05	6,66E+04	1,04E+06
Césium 137	43 000 ± 11 000 (n=218)	1,35E+05	2,64E+04	6,69E+05
Cobalt 60	41 000 ± 11 000 (n=76)	4,43E+04	1,00E+04	1,96E+05
Thorium 228	37 000 ± 7 000 (n=182)	1,52E+05	2,64E+04	8,76E+05
Argent 110m	35 000 ± 5 000 (n=38)	4,85E+05		
Béryllium 7	33 000 ± 11 000 (n=183)	3,87E+04	8,06E+03	1,85E+05
Actinium 228	29 000 ± 8 000 (n=222)			
Manganese 54	23 000 ± 1000 (n=104)	7,21E+04	1,09E+04	4,76E+05
Potassium 40	11 000 ± 2 000 (n=225)	1,93E+03	5,66E+02	6,95E+03
Curium 244	8 000 ± 1 000 (n=46)	3,26E+04	8,96E+03	1,18E+05
Protactinium 234	6 100 ± 1 600 (n=222)	1,21E+05	4,73E+04	3,11E+05
Thorium 232	5 000 ± 900 (n=132)	1,52E+05	2,64E+04	8,76E+05
Thorium 230	3 700 ± 800 (n=66)	1,52E+05	2,64E+04	8,76E+05
Thorium 234	3 600 ± 1 000 (n=206)	1,52E+05	2,64E+04	8,76E+05
Radium 226	1 700 ± 300 (n=195)	5,21E+03	9,79E+02	2,77E+04
Radium 228	1 600 ± 300 (n=105)	5,21E+03	9,79E+02	2,77E+04
Uranium 234	1 400 ± 300 (n=35)	1,19E+04	6,94E+02	2,04E+05
Uranium 238	1 400 ± 300 (n=195)	1,19E+04	6,94E+02	2,04E+05
Antimoine 125	500 ± 100 (n=93)	8,14E+03	1,65E+03	4,01E+04
Strontium 90	550 ± 90 (n=104)	2,96E+03	3,31E+02	2,65E+04
Iode 131	<1	3,32E+03	2,06E+03	5,36E+03
Sodium 22	<1	1,53E+03	8,01E+02	2,92E+03

**Referential Regional Background (2011-2018)**

	<b>Hérault River</b>				<b>Orb River</b>			
	<b>SS (Bq/kg<sub>dry</sub>)</b>		<b>Filtered water (Bq/L)</b>		<b>SS (Bq/kg<sub>dry</sub>)</b>		<b>Filtered water</b>	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	
<b>H3</b>	nd		0.7	0.1			0.2	
<b>OBT</b>	0.05	0.03	nd	-	0.07	0.04	nd	
<b>OBT*</b>	0.7	0.4	nd	-	0.9	0.5	nd	
<b>K40</b>	656	50	0.04	0.01	618	23	0.04	
<b>Be7</b>	62	33	0.002	0.001	81	25	0.004	
<b>Pa234</b>	47	11	0.02	0.01	46	9	0.006	
<b>Ac228</b>	45	8	0.003	0.001	42	5	0.001	
<b>Cs137</b>	6	1	0.0001	0.0001	20	4	0.0001	
<b>Sr90</b>	0.5	0.1	0.002	0.001	2,5	0.5	0.002	
<b>Na22</b>	nd		0.00003	0.00001	-	-	0.00003	
<b>Pu239+240</b>	0.08	0.03	0.0000007	0.0000001	0,7	0.1	0.0000011	
<b>Pu238</b>	0.003	0.001	< 0.0000001	-	0.03	0.01	< 0.0000001	
<b>Am241</b>	0.05	0.01	<0.00000001	-	0.29	0.05	0.00000008	

1 Radionuclides in waters and suspended sediments in the Rhone River  
2 (France) - Current contents, anthropic pressures and trajectories

3  
4 GRAPHICAL ABSTRACT



7  
8  
9