

CHRONIC RETENE EXPOSURE CAUSES SUSTAINED INDUCTION OF CYP1A  
ACTIVITY AND PROTEIN IN RAINBOW TROUT (*ONCORHYNCHUS MYKISS*)NUNO M. FRAGOSO,<sup>†</sup> JOANNE L. PARROTT,<sup>‡</sup> MARK E. HAHN,<sup>§</sup> and PETER V. HODSON\*<sup>†</sup><sup>†</sup>School of Environmental Studies, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario K7L 3N6, Canada<sup>‡</sup>National Water Research Institute, Canada Centre for Inland Waters, Burlington, Ontario L7R 4A6, Canada<sup>§</sup>Department of Biology, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, Woods Hole, Massachusetts 02543, USA

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**Abstract**—The removal of persistent chlorinated organic compounds from pulp mill effluents has not eliminated mixed function oxygenase (MFO) induction by these effluents. Therefore, continuous MFO induction downstream of pulp mills may be due to exposure to more labile compounds, such as retene (an alkyl-substituted phenanthrene), which typically cause transient induction after a single brief exposure. Because fish are exposed continuously to pulp mill effluents, we have tested, and rejected, the null hypothesis that continuous exposure of fish to retene does not cause sustained MFO induction. Rainbow trout exposed continuously to retene, a component of some pulp mill effluents and sediments downstream of pulp mills, showed concentration-dependent increases in hepatic ethoxyresorufin-*O*-deethylase (EROD) activity. The increase in EROD activity was sustained over 32 d of continuous exposure, but it diminished to background levels within 4 d after transfer to clean water. The enzymatic response was confirmed by measuring changes in the content of immunodetectable cytochrome P4501A (CYP1A) protein. These data support a role for labile, nonhalogenated compounds in chronic effects of pulp mill effluents on fish.

**Keywords**—Retene    Cytochrome P4501A    Ethoxyresorufin-*O*-deethylase    Induction    Pulp mill effluent

## INTRODUCTION

Pulp and paper mill effluents have many deleterious effects on fish including histopathologic changes, deformities, physiologic stress and toxicity, delayed sexual maturation, impaired reproduction, changes in growth rate, and changes in population structure [1-3]. Elevated activity of mixed function oxygenase (MFO) enzymes is a common biochemical response observed in fish downstream of many pulp and paper mills [2] and is consistently observed throughout the year [4]. Mixed function oxygenase induction and the toxicologic effects of bleached-kraft mill effluents (BKME) have been attributed to the presence of halogenated compounds, such as dioxins and furans [1,5,6]. However, many sublethal effects, including elevated MFO activity, have been seen in fish exposed to effluent from mills not using chlorine bleaching, or from mills using ClO<sub>2</sub> bleaching and secondary treatment to eliminate chlorinated dioxins and furans [2,7].

Munkittrick et al. [8] showed that 1 year after the installation of secondary treatment at a mill in Jackfish Bay, Ontario, Canada, treated BKME was still a potent inducer, suggesting that inducing agents had not been removed by secondary treatment or that persistent inducers were still present in contaminated sediments. However, within 2 weeks of a mill shutdown, MFO induction was reduced in all three fish species that inhabited the waters near the mill. Hence, it appears that induction is not related to the presence of persistent compounds in the receiving water ecosystem, including its sediments. Transfer of wild, caged, or laboratory-exposed fish to clean water after BKME exposure results in a rapid loss of induction, with an estimated half-life of less than 8 d for induction [2]. In contrast, laboratory experiments have shown that induction

with dioxins and furans is sustained for much longer periods (weeks), even after a brief exposure [9,10].

These data suggest that labile compounds are present that may mimic the induction of persistent dioxinlike compounds. Burnison et al. [11] used bioassay-driven fractionation techniques to confirm that inducers in secondary-treated BKME included multi-ring polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) with alkyl substitutions instead of chlorine substitution. This raises the possibility that prolonged exposure to labile compounds may sustain MFO induction, as does dioxin exposure.

We examined whether BKME-derived PAHs can cause sustained induction of MFO activity in rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), using continuous exposure to retene (7-isopropyl-1-methylphenanthrene) as a model. Retene is thought to be formed from the in situ anaerobic metabolism of abietic or dehydroabietic acid, two resin acids found in some pulp mill effluents [12]. Resin acids are natural plant products and are major contributors to toxicity with other wood extractives in spent cooking liquors [13,14]. Retene has been found in unbleached kraft pulp and paper mill effluent [15] and is believed to be formed from its precursors in anoxic pockets within aeration treatment ponds [16,17]. Retene is used as an indicator of anthropogenic sources of PAHs in sediments, and concentrations range from 10 to 800 ng/g dry weight in uncontaminated lakes of forest watersheds [12]. In sediments downstream of pulp mills, retene concentrations can be much higher, 2,000 µg/g dry weight (M. Fox, personal communication). This indicates that indigenous fish could be exposed to retene in effluent or to retene in sediments. Preliminary work by Parrott et al. [18] has shown that retene induces MFO activity, whereas abietic acid and phenanthrene do not. Thus, we examined the ability of chronic retene exposure to cause sustained MFO induction in juvenile rainbow trout and as-

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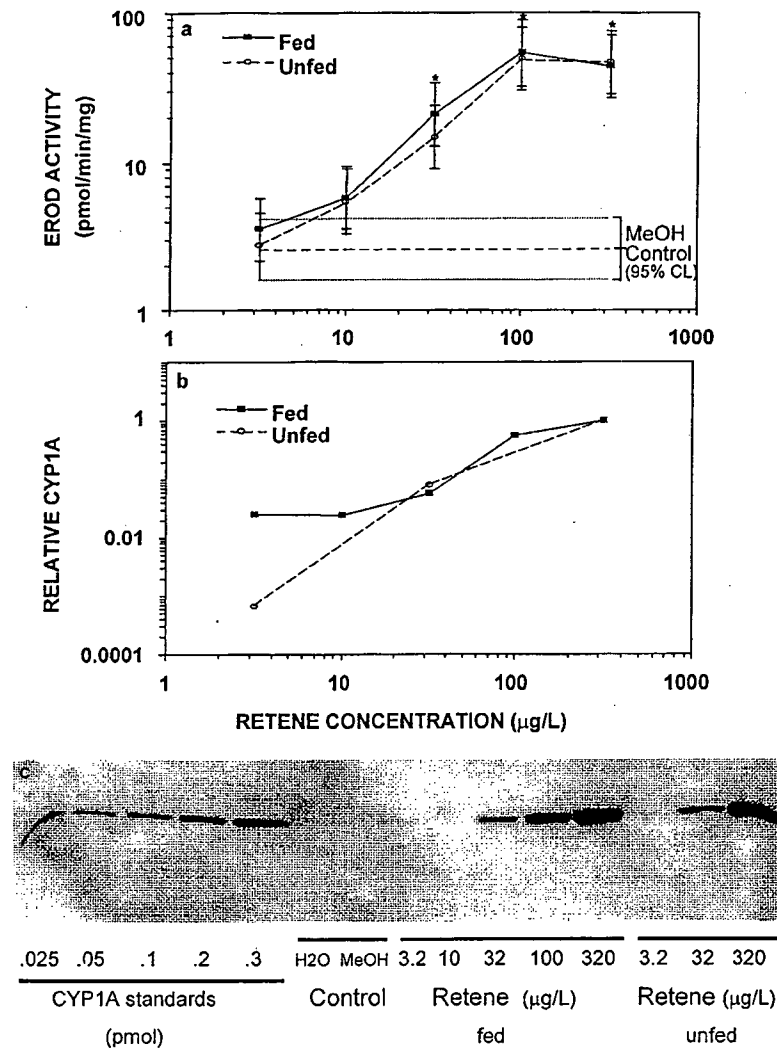


Fig. 1. Concentration dependence of rainbow trout hepatic (a) ethoxyresorufin-*O*-deethylase (EROD) activity, (b) cytochrome P4501A (CYP1A) protein during continuous exposure to waterborne retene over 4 d, and (c) western blot of CYP1A. An asterisk (\*) denotes that both fed and unfed retene treatments are significantly different from control at a probability level of 0.05.

sessed the loss of MFO induction upon transfer to clean water. We have tested, and rejected, the null hypotheses that continuous exposure of fish to retene does not cause sustained induction and that no change in ethoxyresorufin-*O*-deethylase (EROD) activity would be observed during depuration of retene.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Experimental design

To measure the potency of retene for inducing MFO enzymes, trout were exposed for 4 and 32 d to five concentrations of retene and two controls. Because of the extended exposure, the effect of feeding on EROD induction was assessed with fed and unfed treatments. The ability of retene to sustain induction was tested by continuous exposure of fish to 100 μg/L of retene for 4 and 32 d. The persistence of MFO induction was assessed by exposing trout to retene for 2 d, followed by transfer to clean water for up to 4 d, when activity approached control levels.

### Fish holding

Experiments were carried out in a 15°C cold room during the summer of 1996 at the National Water Research Institute, Canada Centre for Inland Waters, Burlington, Ontario, Canada. Rainbow trout (~2 g) were obtained from Rainbow Springs Hatchery (Thamesford, ON, Canada) or from Spring Valley Trout Farm (Petersburg, ON, Canada). Fish were held under a constant 16h light: 8 h dark cycle, in dechlorinated Burlington water with a hardness of  $131 \pm 3$  mg CaCO<sub>3</sub>/L and a water flow above 1 L/g of fish/d.

Fish were fed Trout Starter (1.5 GR; Martin Mills Profishnet Aquaculture Feed, Tavistock, ON, Canada) at a rate of 1.5% body weight/d. During exposure-response experiments, fish were divided into fed and unfed treatments. Feeding was stopped in the unfed treatments at least 48 h before exposures and fish remained unfed throughout 4- and 32-d exposures. Fed fish were given food once daily throughout the exposure period, up to 48 h before sampling. Fish in the time series and depuration experiments were fed by a similar regime.

A loading density of  $\leq 1$  g of fish per liter of water was

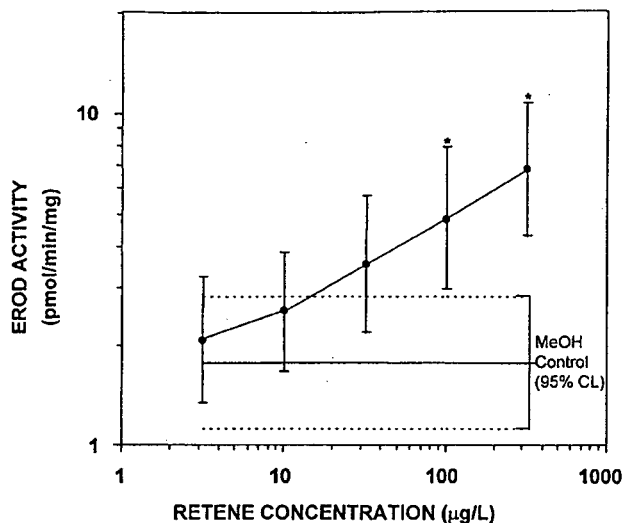


Fig. 2. Concentration dependence of rainbow trout hepatic ethoxyresorufin-*O*-deethylase (EROD) activity during continuous exposure to waterborne retene over 32 d. An asterisk (\*) denotes that value is significantly different from control at a probability level of 0.05.

achieved by placing five 2-g fish in 10 L of water or five 4-g fish in 20 L of water. Aquaria were 20-L, black, high-density polyethylene plastic buckets, lined with clear food-grade polyethylene bags (3 mil; Apache Plastic, Burlington, ON, Canada). Because of slime build up, bags were replaced every 8 d during 32-d exposures. Tanks were unaerated throughout the experiments. All exposures were waterborne (nominal concentrations reported) with static daily renewal of water and solutions. Water quality was monitored daily, and mean ( $\pm$ SD) temperature was  $14.6 \pm 0.5^\circ\text{C}$ , pH was  $7.3 \pm 0.5$ , and dissolved oxygen was  $7.0 \pm 0.2$  mg/L.

*Exposure regimes*

Exposure-response experiments consisted of groups of five fish exposed to 3.2, 10, 32, 100, and 320  $\mu\text{g}$  retene/L, and to solvent (methanol [MeOH]) and negative (water) controls. The total volume of MeOH in treated and solvent tanks was 0.2 ml/L of water. Fish were sampled after 4 or 32 d of continuous exposure.

In time-series and depuration experiments, fish were exposed to 100  $\mu\text{g}$ /L of retene (the concentration causing maximum induction in exposure-response experiments), 10  $\mu\text{g}$ /L

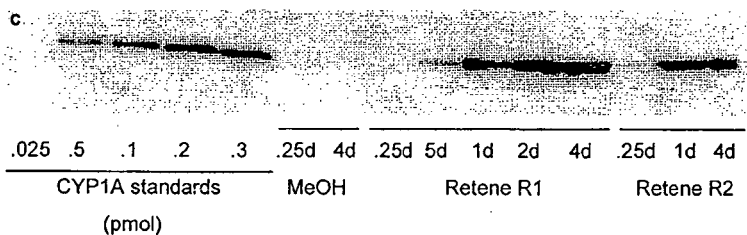
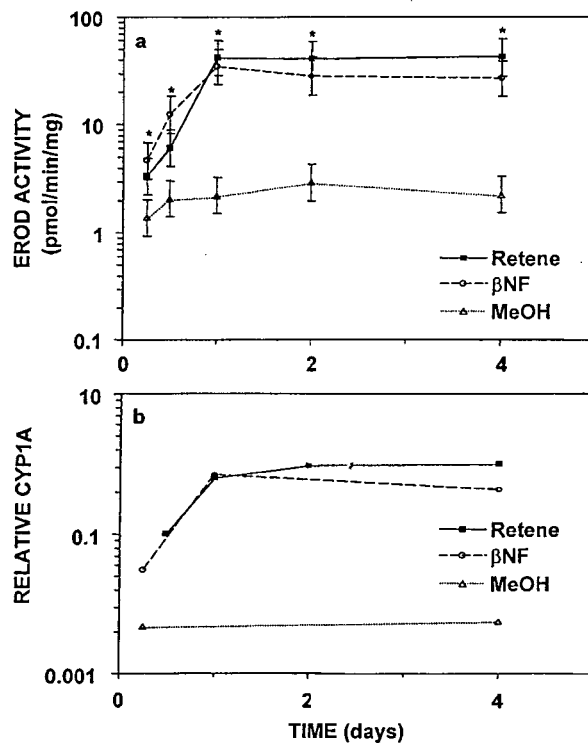


Fig. 3. Time course of induction of rainbow trout hepatic (a) ethoxyresorufin-*O*-deethylase (EROD) activity, (b) cytochrome P4501A (CYP1A) protein during 4 d of continuous exposure to waterborne retene (100  $\mu\text{g}$ /L), beta-naphthoflavone ( $\beta\text{NF}$ ) (10  $\mu\text{g}$ /L; positive control), or methanol (MeOH) (200  $\mu\text{l}$ /L; negative control), and (c) western blot of CYP1A protein. An asterisk (\*) denotes that both retene and  $\beta\text{NF}$  treatments are significantly different from the MeOH control at a probability level of 0.05.

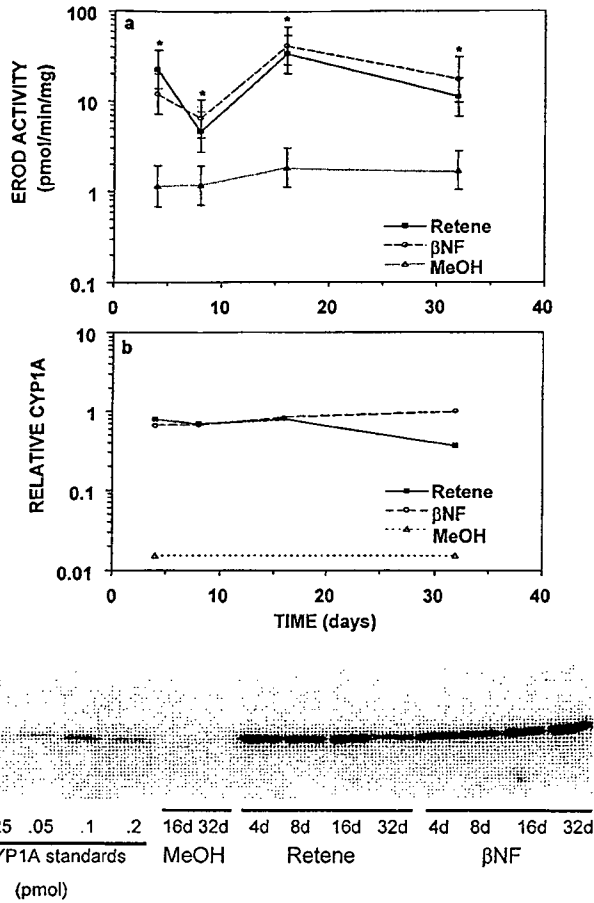


Fig. 4. Time course of induction of rainbow trout hepatic (a) ethoxyresorufin-*O*-deethylase (EROD) activity, (b) cytochrome P4501A (CYP1A) protein during continuous exposure to waterborne retene (100 µg/L), beta-naphthoflavone (βNF) (10 µg/L; positive control), or methanol (MeOH) (200 µl/L; negative control), and western blot of CYP1A protein. An asterisk (\*) denotes that both retene and βNF treatments are significantly different from the MeOH control at a probability level of 0.05.

of beta-naphthoflavone (βNF) (positive control), 2 ml of MeOH (solvent control), or water (negative control). Time-series experiments lasted 4 or 32 d and fish were sampled on days 0.25, 0.5, 1, 2, and 4, for 4-d exposures, or on days 4, 8, 16, and 32 for 32-d exposures. Fish in depuration experiments were transferred to clean water after 2 d of exposure to retene (100 µg/L) or βNF (10 µg/L). They were sampled 2 d after exposure started (0 d of depuration) and 0.5, 1, 2, and 4 d after transfer to clean water.

At the end of the exposure period, fish were given a blow to the head, their spinal cords were severed, they were weighed, and their livers were removed and weighed. Livers less than 30 mg were homogenized in microcentrifuge tubes in 500 µl of HEPES grinding buffer (11.184 g KCl, 5.206 g HEPES sodium salt buffer, 1 L water, pH 7.5). Another 250 µl of buffer was added for every 10 mg of liver over 30 mg. Homogenates were centrifuged at 9,000 g for 20 min at 2°C. The supernatant (S9 fraction) was removed using a Pasteur pipette, placed in a cryovial, quick frozen in liquid nitrogen, and stored at -80°C.

**Assay for EROD activity**

All samples were assayed in triplicate for EROD activity and total protein. An aliquot of 50 µl of S9 fraction was added

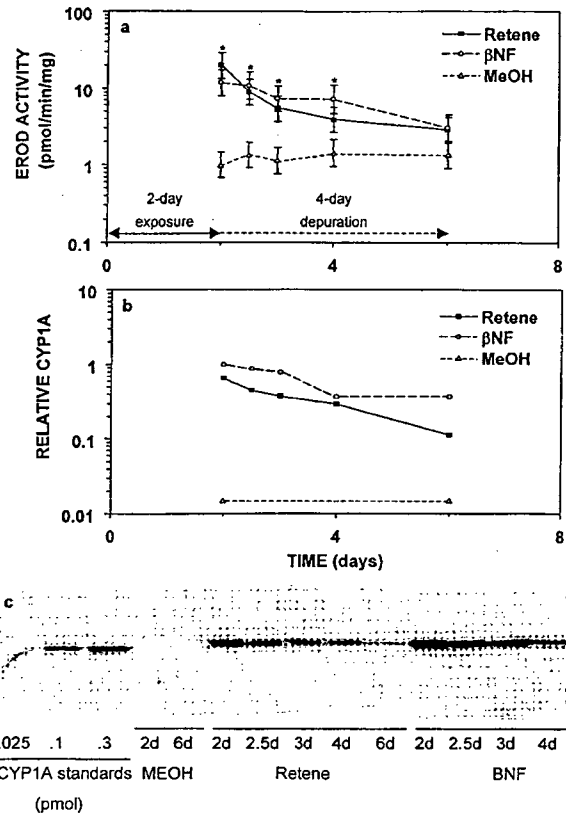


Fig. 5. Hepatic (a) ethoxyresorufin-*O*-deethylase (EROD) activity, (b) cytochrome P4501A (CYP1A) protein in rainbow trout exposed to waterborne retene (100 µg/L), beta-naphthoflavone (βNF) (10 µg/L; positive control), or methanol (MeOH) (200 ml/L; negative control) for 2 d followed by a 4-d depuration period, and (c) western blot of CYP1A protein. An asterisk (\*) denotes that both retene and βNF treatments are significantly different from the MeOH control at a probability level of 0.05.

to each well of a Falcon or Costar 96-well tissue culture treated microplate (Fisher Scientific, Ottawa, ON, Canada). Ten microliters of resorufin standards in dimethylsulfoxide (DMSO) were added to one row of wells, consisting of six concentra-

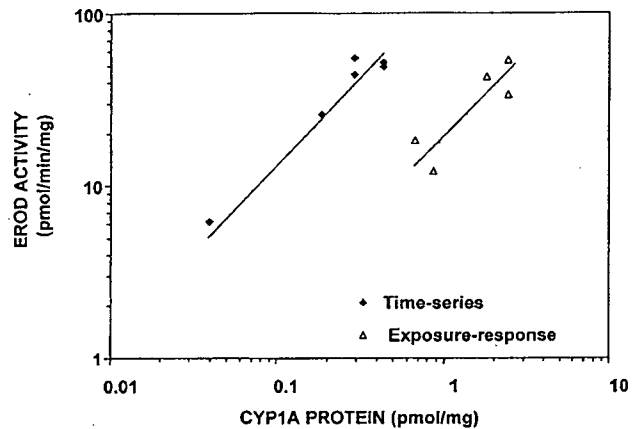


Fig. 6. Regression analysis of hepatic ethoxyresorufin-*O*-deethylase (EROD) activity versus cytochrome P4501A (CYP1A) protein in rainbow trout exposed continuously to waterborne retene during a 4-d time series (100 µg/L) and a 4-d exposure-response experiment (3.2-320 µg/L).

tions in duplicate, ranging from 0 to 5.0  $\mu\text{g/ml}$ . Fifty microliters of 7-ethoxyresorufin (22  $\mu\text{M}$ ) in DMSO diluted 10-fold in HEPES sodium salt buffer (100 mM, pH 7.8) was added to each well and the plates were incubated in the dark for 10 min. Enzyme reactions were started by the addition of 10  $\mu\text{l}$  of the reduced form of nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide phosphate (NADPH), tetrasodium salt (cofactor; 24 mM) to each well. Changes in fluorescence were measured once per minute for 12 min at room temperature with a CYTOFLUOR® 2300 Plate Reader (PerSeptive Biosystems, Burlington, ON, Canada) equipped with an excitation filter of 530 nm, 30 nm bandwidth and emission filter of 590 nm, 35 nm band width.

#### Micro Bio-Rad protein assay

Fifty microliters of S9 fraction was diluted into 500  $\mu\text{l}$  of water and 10  $\mu\text{l}$  of diluted sample was added to each well, in triplicate. Similarly, 10  $\mu\text{l}$  of protein standards (bovine serum album, 0–50 mg/ml) was added to an empty row of wells with 200  $\mu\text{l}$  of Micro Bio-Rad Protein Dye (Bio-Rad, Mississauga, ON, Canada). The plate was incubated for 5 min at room temperature and the absorbance read at 600 nm.

Rates of specific enzyme activity were calculated from the slopes of fluorescence versus time, standard curves of resorufin, and measured protein concentrations. Final values were expressed in  $\text{pmole/min/mg}$  protein.

#### Data analysis

Data were checked for homogeneity of variance using Bartlett's test, and then log transformed [19]. Log-transformed data were used in multifactorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) at a 0.05 probability level. The actual  $p$  values from the ANOVAs are reported in the text. Means and 95% confidence limits were calculated according to Hodson et al. [19].

#### Western analysis

The S9 fraction from livers of selected fish from each experiment were assayed for cytochrome P4501A (CYP1A) by immunoblot analysis [20], with modifications as described in Hahn et al. [21]. Representative samples from each treatment group (i.e., samples with an EROD activity close to treatment mean values) were analyzed.

Total protein, measured in the Micro Bio-Rad assay, was used to calculate the volume of sample required to load 100  $\mu\text{g}$  of total protein into each well. Samples were diluted in a sample treatment buffer solution (0.25 M Tris HCl, 40% glycerol, 4% sodium dodecyl sulfate [SDS], 0.008% bromophenol blue, 5%  $\beta$ -mercaptoethanol). Three or five CYP1A standards (microsomes from scup [*Stenotomus chrysops*] injected with  $\beta$ NF, containing known amounts of CYP1A) were diluted in the same manner, for a range of concentrations (0.025–0.3 pmol CYP1A/lane). Samples and standards were loaded onto gels using a 100- $\mu\text{l}$  Hamilton syringe.

Proteins were run on a sodium dodecyl sulfate–polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis (SDS-PAGE) gel over a 16-h period (initial  $I = 35$  mA;  $V = 95$  V), after which gels were soaked in Tris-buffered saline solution (100 mM Tris, 2.5 M NaCl, pH 7.5) for 15 min. Proteins were transferred to a nitrocellulose membrane (Nytran®) using a Semi-Dry Transfer Apparatus (Bio-Rad, Hercules, CA, USA) at 15 V, 0.9 A for 40 min. Reversible staining with Ponceau Stain (Fisher Scientific, Pittsburgh, PA, USA) for 5 min confirmed protein transfer. The membrane was preincubated in Rad-Free blocking buffer (Schleicher and Schuell, Keene, NH, USA) for 1 h, after which

fresh buffer containing the anti-scup CYP1A monoclonal antibody (MAb), 1-12-3 (10  $\mu\text{g/ml}$ ) [20] was added. After 1 h, the membrane was washed with deionized water and rinsed in Tris-buffered saline solution three times. The membrane was incubated for 1 h in the buffer containing a second antibody, alkaline phosphatase-conjugated goat anti-mouse antibody (GAMAP; Schleicher and Schuell) and washed as before.

Monoclonal antibody 1-12-3-reactive protein (CYP1A) on the membrane was visualized using Tropix ready-to-use solution (Tropix, Bedford, MA, USA) or chemiluminescent substrate sheets (Schleicher and Schuell) and x-ray film (Kodak X-OMAT, Sigma Chemical, St. Louis, MO, USA). Exposed film was photographed using a Kodak DCS 2000 digital camera with micro 55-mm lens (Eastman Kodak, Rochester, NY, USA). Images were captured in Adobe Photoshop [22]. Relative band density was quantified using NIH Image software [23]. Because most samples were outside the range of the standard curve, all bands were normalized relative to the darkest band on the gel. Thus, CYP1A protein values represent relative, rather than absolute, amounts.

## RESULTS

### Exposure–response experiments

Four- and 32-d exposures to retene caused MFO induction in trout liver (Figs. 1a and 2). As retene exposure concentration increased, EROD activity increased above basal levels, relative to clean water- and MeOH-exposed fish ( $p < 0.001$ ). The EROD activity reached a maximum in fish exposed to 100 and 320  $\mu\text{g/L}$  of retene, in 4- and 32-d experiments, respectively, but fish exposed for 4 d were significantly more induced (13-fold relative to controls) than those exposed for 32 d (two-fold) ( $p < 0.001$ ). The CYP1A protein showed a similar response to retene exposure and a strong correlation occurred between EROD activity and CYP1A protein content of the individual fish in the 4-d experiment (Fig. 1b and c). The CYP1A content was not measured in 32-d fish, as no samples were available.

Feeding did not have a significant effect on EROD activity, in either 4- or 32-d experiments ( $p = 0.071$  and  $p = 0.338$ , respectively), and no differences occurred among replicates ( $p = 0.585$ ). However, some mortality of unfed fish (30 of 70 fish died) occurred in all treatments (water, MeOH, retene) near the completion of the 32-d experiment, but none occurred in fed treatments.

### Time series

Both retene- and  $\beta$ NF-exposed fish showed elevated EROD activity compared to MeOH-exposed fish within 12 h of exposure. Activity reached a maximum within 24 h and stayed elevated over 4 d of continuous exposure (Fig. 3a). The EROD activity was also significantly elevated in retene- and  $\beta$ NF-exposed fish over 32 d ( $p < 0.001$ ) (Fig. 4a). Changes in EROD activity were paralleled by changes in CYP1A protein (Fig. 3b and 4b).

### Depuration

After a 2-d exposure, the EROD activity of fish exposed to retene and  $\beta$ NF was significantly higher than for fish exposed to MeOH ( $p < 0.001$ ). The EROD activity of retene- and  $\beta$ NF-exposed fish started to decline within hours of transferring fish to clean water (Fig. 5a) and approached control (MeOH) values within 4 d postexposure. A replicate effect was observed ( $p = 0.008$ ), that is, the EROD activity of rep-

licate two fish was higher than that of replicate one fish for both retene- and  $\beta$ NF-treated fish. Analysis of EROD data using fish and liver weight as covariables by analysis of covariance eliminated the difference between replicates ( $p = 0.584$ ). The CYP1A protein content was highest in retene and  $\beta$ NF exposures at day 2 (beginning of depuration) and decreased rapidly during depuration (Fig. 5b). The CYP1A protein content of MeOH-exposed fish was barely visible on gels ( $<0.025$  pmol/lane) and did not change during the 4 d of depuration (Fig. 5c).

#### DISCUSSION

Induction of EROD was a sensitive indicator of retene and  $\beta$ NF exposure. Induction of the MFO system was evident with retene concentrations as low as  $10 \mu\text{g/L}$  and it was sustained in both time-series and exposure-response experiments over 32 d. The importance of a continuous exposure in sustaining EROD induction was demonstrated in the depuration experiment: a rapid loss of EROD activity suggests that retene is labile and rapidly eliminated by fish. Parallel changes in EROD and CYP1A protein content show that increased EROD activity is due to increased levels of catalytic protein (CYP1A) that can likely be attributed to ligand binding to the aryl hydrocarbon receptor (AhR) and subsequent gene activation. The strong correlation also demonstrated that enzyme activity was a good measure of protein concentration and induction.

The EROD activity increased with retene exposure, confirming the earlier results of Parrott et al. [18], and the lack of induction in negative and solvent controls (water and MeOH) demonstrated that retene was causing the effect independent of other experimental parameters, such as pH, dissolved oxygen, and temperature. The benefit of feeding fish during experiments was a lower incidence of mortality relative to unfed fish. The lack of a feeding effect on MFO induction allowed us to feed fish during time-course experiments and to avoid the bias caused by mortality in unfed treatments in 32-d exposures. Death was likely a result of starvation, as the frequency of mortality was similar in all unfed treatments (water, MeOH, and retene).

The parallel increase in EROD activity and CYP1A protein (Fig. 6) supports the involvement of the AhR and the CYP1A gene in retene-induced changes in catalytic activity. However, a difference was found among experiments in the amount of CYP1A protein associated with a given amount of catalytic activity (Fig. 6: time-series versus exposure-response experiments), perhaps because protein concentrations were outside the range of standards (Figs. 1c and 3c) and we measured relative and not absolute concentrations. Direct studies of AhR binding will be needed to demonstrate retene binding and activation of the AhR by retene and to determine AhR binding affinity relative to tetrachlorodibenzo-*p*-dioxin (TCDD) or  $\beta$ NF. This model is further supported by the similar responses of fish exposed to  $\beta$ NF, a model CYP1A inducer.

Continuous exposure of fish to retene ( $100 \mu\text{g/L}$ ) and to  $\beta$ NF ( $10 \mu\text{g/L}$ ) caused sustained MFO induction over 32 d. Beta-naphthoflavone was tested at  $10 \mu\text{g/L}$  because it inhibits microsomal EROD activity at higher concentrations ( $50$  ppb  $\beta$ NF in  $1 \mu\text{l}$  of dimethylformamide) [24], and retene was tested at  $100 \mu\text{g/L}$ , the concentration giving maximum induction in 4-d exposures (Fig. 1). Trout hepatic CYP1A responded identically to both compounds. After 32 d, mean EROD activities for retene- and  $\beta$ NF-exposed fish were 6- and 10-fold greater than for MeOH-exposed fish, an induction similar to that of

fish exposed to BKME in the wild and in the laboratory [19]. However, retene-induced EROD activity ( $5\text{--}50$  pmol/min/mg) was much lower than activities of fish exposed to dioxins. Dioxin-treated rainbow trout commonly have EROD values ranging from 100 to  $1,000$  pmol/min/mg [25], presumably because of the persistence of dioxins and their high affinities for the AhR. Prolonged activation of the CYP1A gene in rainbow trout, perch, and trout hepatocytes in culture is attributed to continuous binding of dioxin to the receptor complex [10,26-29]. The lower EROD values caused by retene suggest that its efficacy for activation of the AhR is lower than that of dioxin and/or that it is more readily metabolized and excreted. Retene behaves more like  $\beta$ NF, which is known to cause transient induction of CYP1A relative to sustained induction by polychlorinated dibenzo-*p*-dioxins and polychlorinated dibenzofurans [26,30]. Thus, the strength and duration of a retene-receptor complex would be less than for dioxin, allowing gene transcription and protein translation to decline sooner than with dioxin.

The apparently rapid depuration of retene (and  $\beta$ NF) can be balanced by continual exposure, as demonstrated by the continuously elevated catalytic activity measured during the 32-d experiments (Fig. 4). Therefore, prolonged exposure of fish to labile PAHs found in pulp mill effluent might be one explanation for the continuous elevation of MFO activity observed downstream of pulp mills. Retene precursors (abietic acid and dehydroabietic acid) are among the most abundant and persistent resin acids present in some bleached and unbleached pulp mill effluents [31]. If anaerobic conditions exist in aeration ponds or sediments, transformation of these compounds to retene may occur, as proposed by Wakeham et al. [12]. Fish inhabiting these waters would be exposed to retene and other labile PAHs throughout the year, resulting in continuously elevated MFO activity in these fish relative to fish from reference sites.

A major limitation in the present experiments is that EROD activity and CYP1A protein content were related to nominal concentrations of retene added to each tank; the actual exposure concentration is unknown. A synchronous fluorometric scanning method has recently been developed to measure retene in water [32]. Measurements independent of this experiment demonstrated a 60% reduction in nominal concentrations of retene within 5 h of adding retene to exposure tanks (S. Billiard, personal communication). Adsorption of retene to the walls of the aquaria, air stones, and air tubing was shown by recovery of retene with MeOH rinses. The rapid loss of MFO induction between days 4 and 8 of the 32-d exposure may be due to an augmented adsorption associated with slime accumulation on tank walls. Therefore, the actual effective concentrations of retene are about 40% of those added to exposure tanks.

In conclusion, the results presented here show that sustained MFO induction in fish exposed to retene is not due to the persistence of the compound in the organism but to the persistence of the exposure. Thus, labile PAHs may cause the same prolonged induction as persistent chlorinated compounds such as TCDD, and might cause toxic effects typically associated with these more persistent compounds.

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