



## **Urban Rivers Restoration Pilot Fact Sheet**

### **Lower Passaic River Remediation and Ecosystem Restoration, New Jersey**

**BACKGROUND—The Lower Passaic River watershed covers approximately 173 square miles in a highly developed urban area of Bergen, Essex, Hudson, and Passaic Counties in northern New Jersey.**

These four counties have a combined population of 2.8 million people with an average density of 4,700 people per square mile. The Lower Passaic River once supported extensive tidal wetlands and provided significant benthic habitat. The Hudson-Raritan Estuary, into which the Passaic flows, has among the highest levels of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and dioxins in sediments in the United States. The Lower Passaic River has been under a fish and shellfish “do not eat” advisory since 1983 due to PCB and dioxin contamination.

**ACTIVITIES, AUTHORITY, AND FUNDING—** In the Lower Passaic River Urban Rivers Restoration pilot, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) are working with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, and New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. The goal of this collaborative effort is to use the authorities of the Superfund program and the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) to develop a comprehensive solution that will remediate and restore the Lower Passaic

River. Success of the project will result in a healthy riparian habitat, improved water quality, more access for recreation, fewer fish consumption bans, lower sediment contamination in dredged materials, and an overall economic revitalization.

Currently, the partner agencies are analyzing historical data and developing field sampling plans to fill in data gaps. In addition, the team is compiling an environmental resource inventory that will serve as a starting point for the selection of ecological restoration projects. The team already has conducted bathymetry, side-scan sonar, and sediment coring surveys to characterize the stretch of the river chosen for an environmental dredging and sediment decontamination pilot. The team has drafted an exposure pathways analysis report to guide its upcoming human health and ecological risk assessment work. The team has begun a hydrodynamic survey to provide input into the contaminant fate and transport model being developed for the river.

Additionally, the team is developing a Community Involvement Plan to meet the outreach needs of all stakeholders that the partner agencies need to reach. Lists of interviewees and interview questions are being compiled jointly by the partner agencies in preparation for obtaining stakeholder input for the plan.

The EPA, USACE, and NJDOT estimated that a comprehensive study to remediate and restore the Lower Passaic River Basin would require \$19 million. USACE and NJDOT, as the local sponsor, are cost-sharing equally \$9 million of the study under WRDA. USACE's funds to conduct the feasibility study are being provided under annual Energy and Water Development Appropriations Acts. NJDOT is funded through the New Jersey Transportation Trust Fund. EPA is pursuing potentially responsible parties (PRPs) to fund its \$10 million share of the study under the Superfund program. A group of 31 PRPs has agreed to provide the funding.

**CONTACTS:**

EPA—Alice Yeh, 212-637-4427

USACE—Scott Nicholson, 212-264-5795

NJDOT—Lisa Baron, 609-530-4779

