



# 2020 EPA REGION 2 Year in Review



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## NOTE FROM REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR

On December 2, 1970, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) began its work to protect human health and the environment. Fifty years later, I am pleased to share the 2020 EPA Region 2 Annual Report with you as we continue to carry out the critical mission that we were tasked with five decades ago.

Although it has been a trying year with the unimaginable challenges that COVID-19 presented, I am extremely proud of our collective work. Under difficult and unique circumstances, Region 2 staff rose to the occasion and continued to support communities in New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and eight federally recognized Indian Nations. I am particularly pleased to share our 2020 accomplishments which highlight our constructive engagement with communities and our partners at the local, state and federal level. In 2020, our work resulted in a cleaner and healthier environment, with our focus on improving water infrastructure, reducing diesel emissions and supporting hurricane recovery, among other successful projects throughout the Region.

As I complete my term as Regional Administrator, I say with confidence that the Region 2 staff are among the most dedicated and passionate group of people that I have had the great privilege to work with. From addressing the shocking contamination at the Love Canal site that led to the formation of the Superfund program, and the dredging of the iconic Hudson River, to empowering communities as they tackle solid waste management and aging water infrastructure, and efforts to help the Caribbean recover from the devastating impacts of Hurricanes Maria and Irma, EPA Region 2's work has been nothing short of remarkable. I am honored to have the opportunity to highlight our great work this year and look forward to celebrating more milestones and notable accomplishments over the next 50 years.

Sincerely,

Peter D. Lopez





*El Yunque National Forest, Puerto Rico*



R2 Employees following COVID-19 precautions during surface water sampling at the Vineland Superfund site in Vineland, N.J.

## ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND COVID-19 PANDEMIC

In 2020 the world learned to adjust to the limitations caused by the global COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the challenges faced since March 2020, EPA has taken necessary steps to uphold its mission to protect human health and the environment, while ensuring that the health and safety of communities, EPA staff, state, tribal partners, and contractors remains a priority.

Region 2 organized and hosted the agency's first virtual public meeting in April, and subsequently, held nine additional virtual public meetings. Region 2 also distributed over 35 COVID-related fact sheets to update the public on the status of the cleanup work in their communities during the pandemic.

EPA ensured that workers implemented health and safety plans specific to preventing the spread of the COVID-19 virus during field activities. These plans included: wearing face coverings, gloves, and other appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) for employees, temperature checks of employees, tracking employees who might be ill, and social distancing. In June, EPA collaborated with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to transfer over 35,000 pieces of excess PPE to emergency and health professionals on the COVID-19 frontlines, including disposable gloves, eye protection, lab coats, and full-body coverall suits.



EPA contributing PPE equipment to FEMA.



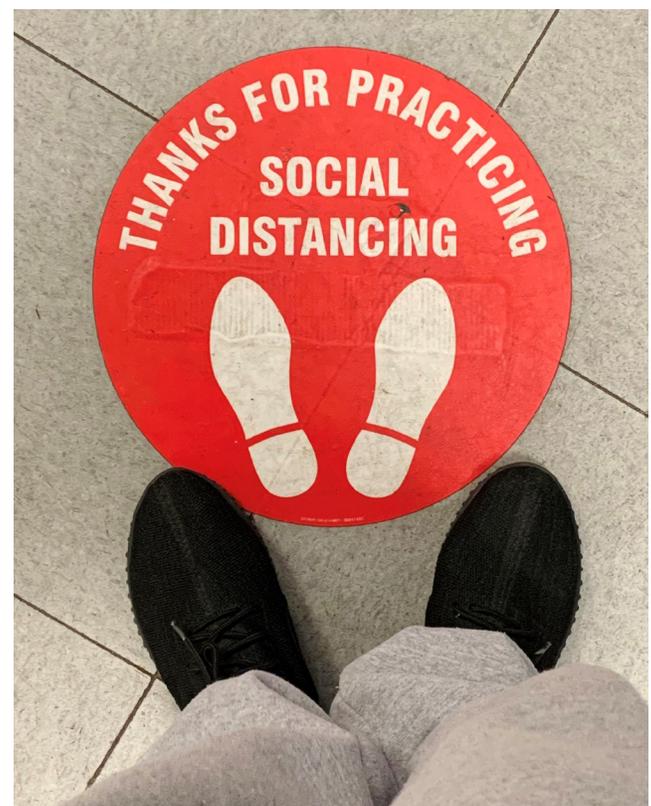
R2 Employee following COVID-19 precautions during soil sampling at the Arsenic Mine Superfund site in Kent, N.Y.

Sampling support efforts to the Region 2 Superfund Program experienced a 5-month delay. During that time, to the Region proactively ordered the necessary supplies and equipment as well as develop job hazard analyses, specific to the upcoming work scheduled once restrictions were lifted. After the region entered re-opening Phase 1, the team was back in the field, prepared with personnel protective equipment required for the task at hand as well as to address COVID-19 health and safety precautions for low and medium risk scenarios. Groundwater, surface water and sediment sampling projects ensued at various Superfund sites, including monitoring residential wells potentially tainted with metals due to proximity to previous mining locations.

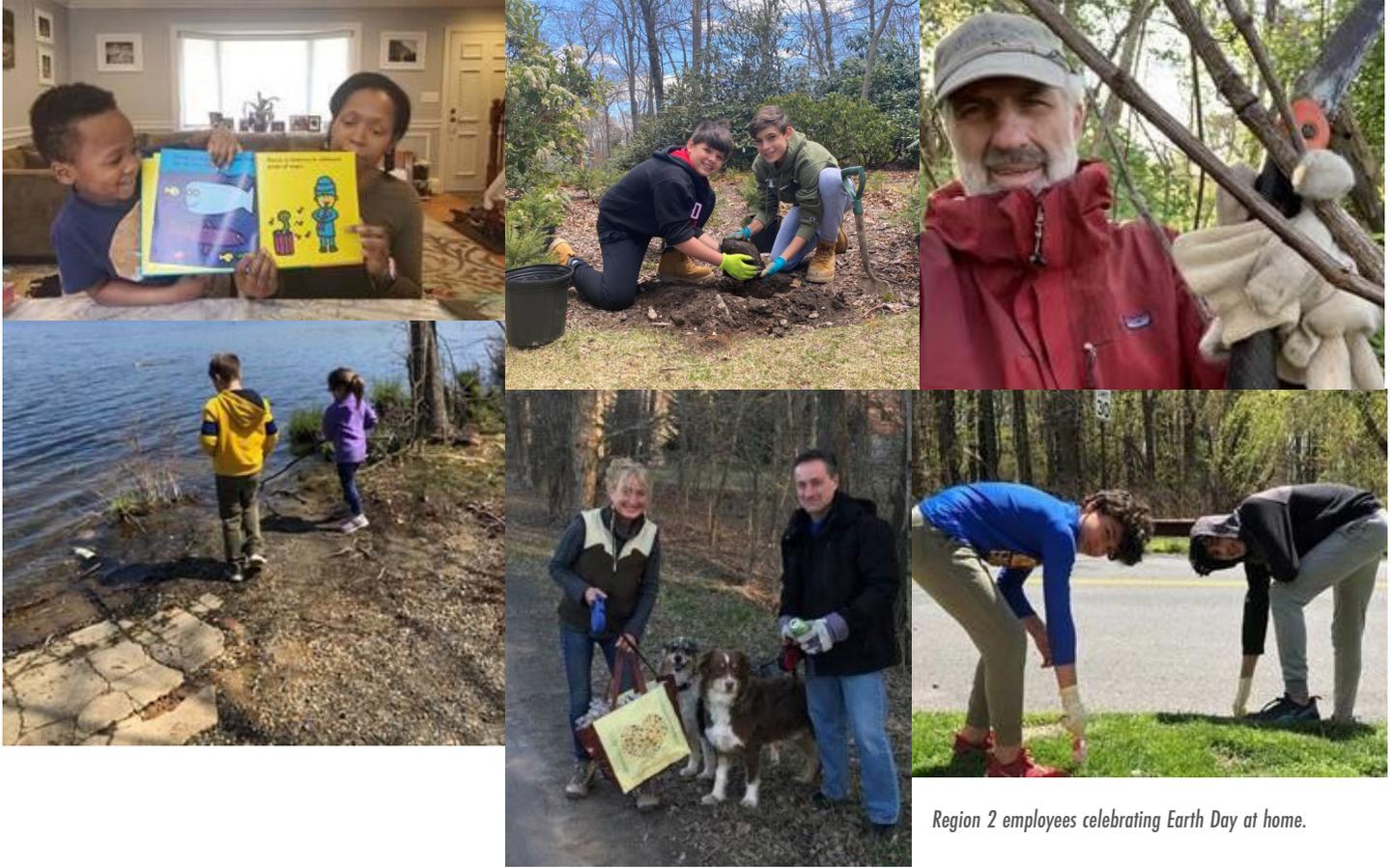
In October, EPA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released updated guidance to the public on properly cleaning and disinfecting spaces. EPA also compiled a list of disinfectant products, including ready-to-use sprays, concentrates, and wipes that can be used to protect against COVID-19. To protect the public, EPA Region 2 issued nearly 30 Advisory Letters and eight Notices of Warning to entities operating in New York and New Jersey addressing pesticide products and devices that were found inefficient in protecting against the coronavirus and other pathogens. Region 2 also issued Notices of Refusal of Admission that prevented the import of 52 illegal pesticide products into New York, New Jersey, and Puerto Rico.

In addition, the Region developed and implemented a strategy to continue approval of webinar-based accreditation training due to the overwhelming demand for remote training during the COVID-19 crisis. Region 2 is the second region in the nation to approve trainers to do webinar-based training. This option can be used to ensure that training continue through emergencies like COVID-19 or during any situation affecting the ability to hold a live class.

For more information on EPA's response to COVID-19, please visit: <https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus>



# 50 YEARS OF EARTH DAY



Region 2 employees celebrating Earth Day at home.

50 years ago, Senator Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin organized national coordinators and volunteers to contribute to a massive citizens demonstration for a cleaner environment. Earth Day was a major turning point in environmental history and the EPA was founded shortly thereafter. Although Earth Day 2020 looked quite different from previous years due to the challenges of COVID-19, EPA Region 2 employees and their families still celebrated the occasion, socially distanced, with **#EarthDayAtHome**.

## HAPPY EARTH DAY



#EarthDay2020  
#EarthDayatHome  
#EPAat50





RA Lopez meets with community members at the Gowanus Canal Superfund site.

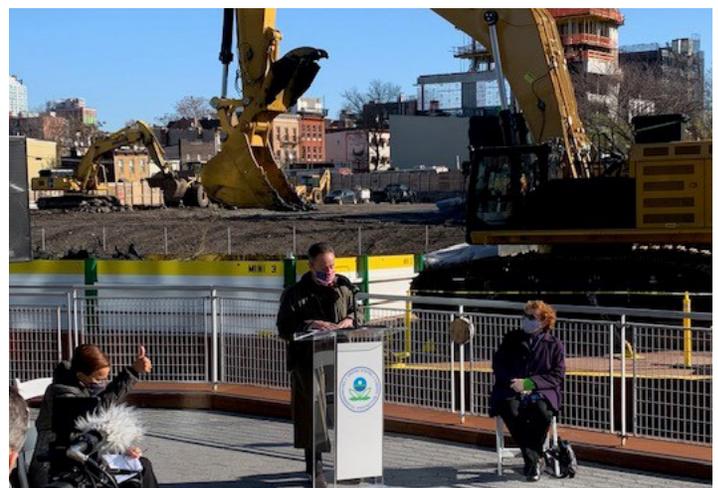
## CLEANING UP OUR NATION'S LAND

### SUPERFUND CLEANUPS

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#### Dredging at the Gowanus Canal Superfund site

A major milestone in the history of one of the nation's most contaminated waterways, full-scale dredging of the Gowanus Canal Superfund site in Brooklyn, New York, began on November 16, 2020. Dredging in this portion of the Canal will be completed in fall 2022, with capping to be completed by mid-2023. The dredging comes after years of detailed engineering, scientific studies, and design work. EPA's partnership with local, state, and federal entities has been the hallmark of this successful collaboration. This achievement demonstrates the progress of the Superfund program and EPA's commitment to protecting human health and the revitalization of the Gowanus and Red Hook communities



RA Lopez announces start of dredging in the Gowanus Canal with Congresswoman Velazquez, NYS Assemblywoman Simon and NYC Councilman Levin.

In 2020 EPA finalized seven cleanup plans to address contamination at Superfund sites across New York, New Jersey and Puerto Rico. The final cleanup plan for each site is contained in a document called a Record of Decision.

To address contaminants in groundwater at the **Ringwood Mines/Landfill Superfund site** in Ringwood, New Jersey, the decision was made to install wells near the Peters Mine Pit and Peters Mine Pit Airshaft, to introduce an oxygen-releasing compound into the aquifer to enhance the breakdown of contaminants. In addition to groundwater, EPA's final cleanup plan also addresses contaminants in mine water in the Peters Mine Pit Airshaft by adding granular activated carbon and resin into the Peters Mine Pit Airshaft to treat contaminants and closing the Airshaft. The 500-acre Ringwood Mines/Landfill Site is in a historic iron mining district in the Borough of Ringwood, New Jersey. The site, which is in a forested area with about 50 private homes, includes abandoned mine shafts and pits, an inactive landfill, and other disposal areas.

The cleanup plan to address soil and sediment contamination at **Sherwin-Williams / Hilliards Creek Superfund site** in Gibbsboro, New Jersey includes a combination of technologies and methods to address contamination present at the former paint manufacturing plant and adjoining areas of the site. EPA's study of these areas shows that sediment is contaminated with arsenic and lead, and soil is contaminated with arsenic, lead and paint solvents. EPA's Record of Decision addresses a nearly 20-acre area of the former manufacturing plant and the headwaters of Hilliards Creek, as well as contamination that extends below several adjoining properties.

Region 2 selected an early action at the **Arsenic Mine Superfund site** in Kent, New York, to help residents impacted by heavily impacted arsenic-contaminated soil at the site by offering to acquire certain properties and permanently relocating those residents.

The final cleanup plan for **Pesticide Warehouse I Superfund site** in Arecibo, Puerto Rico, includes excavation and removal of the upper 10 feet of contaminated soil. EPA will heat excavated soil to remove contamination and dispose of it at facilities licensed to receive the waste, as well as demolish remaining dilapidated buildings at the site to accommodate the excavation. Future use of the site is restricted to ensure that it is consistent with the soil remedy. Pesticide Warehouse I was a pesticide storage warehouse that the Puerto Rico Land Authority owns, which was used for pesticide mixing and storage operations from 1953 to 2003. In October 1999, the property was leased to Agrocambios, Inc. During its years of operation, the site was used to supply pesticides for pineapple crops in the surrounding area as well as for the storage and preparation of insecticides, herbicides and fertilizers. (Source: <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-finalizes-cleanup-plan-address-pesticide-warehouse-i-superfund-site-arecibo-puerto>)

## Spotlight on Region 2 Community Member

As we celebrate our 50th anniversary, we also celebrate the 100th birthday of dedicated community partner, Joseph Mongelli, a resident of North Bergen, New Jersey. Mr. Mongelli is a World War II veteran as well as a regular participant at our public meetings for the Quanta Resources Superfund site in Edgewater, New Jersey. His input and engagement throughout the years have improved our site-specific Superfund process and reminds us that community involvement is at the center of our efforts.



Joseph Mongelli celebrating his 100th birthday

## Sites Deleted from National Priorities List

2020 marked the third year in a row that EPA has deleted a historically high number of Superfund sites from the Superfund National Priorities List (NPL) sending a clear message that human health and the environment are protected and paving the way for redeveloping these properties into community assets. This year, the **FMC Corp. Dublin Road Landfill** site in the Town of Shelby, New York and **Hormigas Groundwater Plume** site in Caguas, Puerto Rico were among the 27 sites deleted nation-wide.



*RA Lopez celebrates successful cleanup at Peter Cooper with NYS Assemblyman Joseph Giglio.*

On October 8, Regional Administrator Pete Lopez toured the former **Peter Cooper Superfund** site in Gowanda, New York, to celebrate the record-breaking deletions. Joined by local and state elected officials, the group toured the site, which was deleted from the EPA's Superfund list last fall. The site, once home to one of the country's largest glue factories, was cleaned up under EPA oversight and turned into a 26-acre park. Park development continues, with construction underway on a creek side amphitheater.

### Peter Cooper Superfund site

On October 8, Regional Administrator Pete Lopez toured the former Peter Cooper Superfund site in Gowanda, New York, to celebrate the record-breaking deletions. Joined by local and state elected officials, the group toured the site, which was deleted from the EPA's Superfund list last fall. The site, once home to one of the country's largest glue factories, was cleaned up under EPA oversight and turned into a 26-acre park. Park development continues, with construction underway on a creek side amphitheater.



*RA Lopez tours the Peter Cooper site with local elected officials, including NYS Assemblyman Joseph Giglio.*



*RA Lopez meets with local leaders at the Charlestown Mall site in Herkimer County, N.Y. to discuss brownfields redevelopment.*

## **BROWNFIELDS**

Throughout 2020, Region 2 creatively worked around the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic to continue to assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse contaminated properties. We completed a total of 47 Brownfield site assessments, one cleanup and made eight properties ready for reuse. The repurposing of these properties turned environmental burdens into community assets by providing housing security, recreational spaces, and social services facilities to communities in need. These projects leveraged over \$9 million in redevelopment investments and nearly 30 local jobs.

In 2020, Region 2 awarded more than \$6 million in grants to help with community assessments, cleanups, and reuse of Brownfields in the future. One example of how brownfields funding is revitalizing communities across the region is our \$375,000 Supplemental Revolving Loan Fund



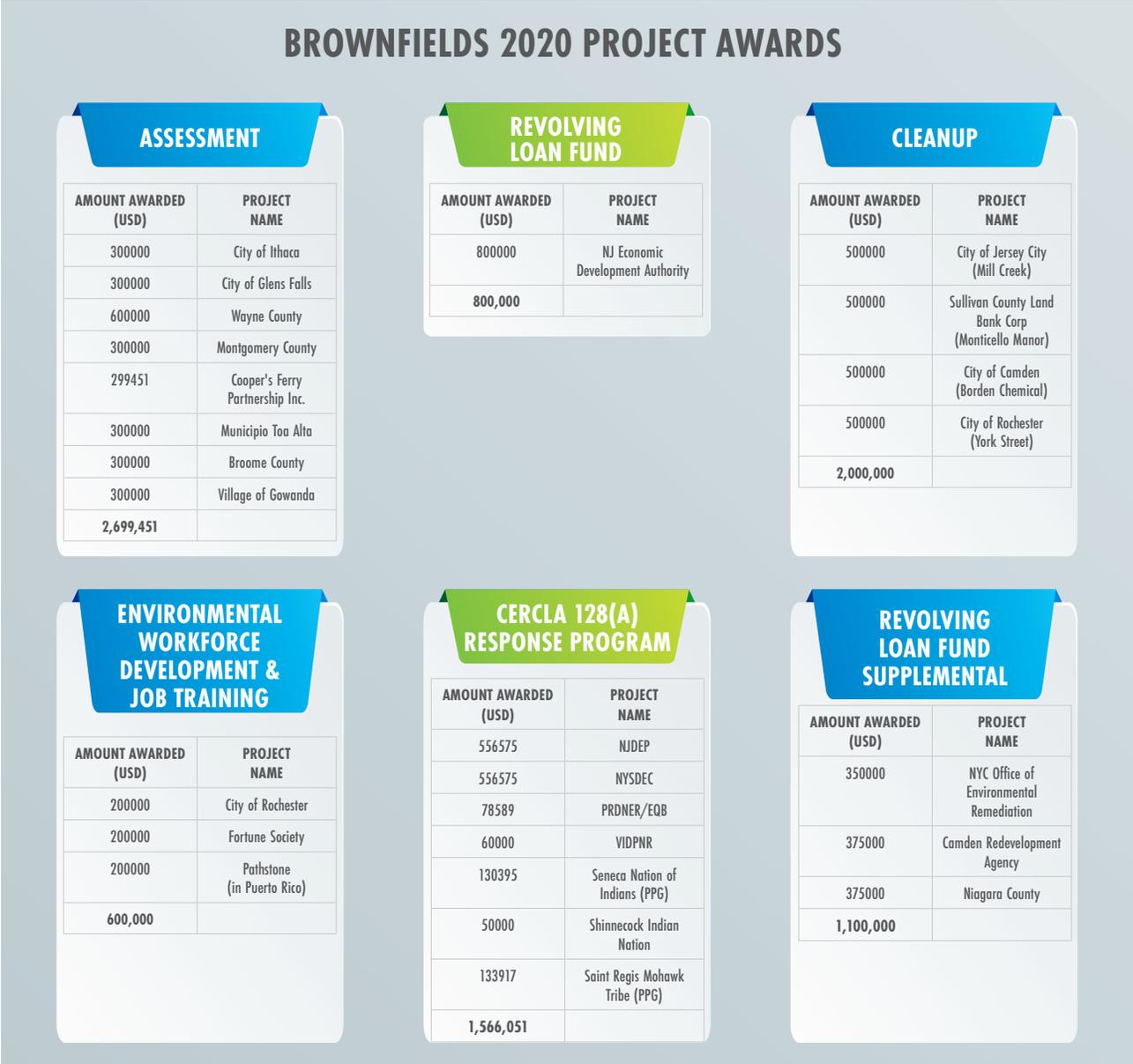
*Senior EPA officials and Rear Admiral Peter Brown tour GSK Pharmaceuticals in Humacao, P.R. and discuss EPA's Brownfields Program.*

award to the Niagara County, New York Department of Economic Development. The funding will be used to repurpose a former elementary school located in the town of Niagara into the town's first senior assisted living complex. The assisted living facility will provide essential services for seniors, create new jobs in construction and staffing, and contribute to new commercial retail space with apartments. Another example is a similar award of \$375,000 to the Camden, New Jersey Redevelopment Agency, which will help support the remediation of the abandoned Camden Laboratories industrial site for development into over 3.5 acres of open space and recreational fields.

Region 2 also awarded a Community-wide Assessment Grant of \$300,000 to the municipality of Toa Alta, Puerto Rico. The funding will be used to evaluate potentially contaminated properties that were abandoned 20 years ago with a view toward cleanup and reuse for residential and commercial purposes.

Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training Grant funds are provided to nonprofit organizations and other eligible entities to recruit and train unemployed and underemployed residents, including veterans and dislocated workers, from solid and hazardous waste-impacted communities and place them in environmental jobs. In 2020, Region 2 awarded a \$200,000 job training grant to the City of Rochester to train 60 students and place at least 49 graduates in environmental jobs. Participants who complete the training will earn two state and five federal certifications.

Finally, despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, Region 2 continued to perform effective outreach to prospective future Brownfields program grantees. In September we conducted a four-day “virtual” webinar series on the fiscal year 2021 grant program competition (both in English and Spanish) for interested applicants throughout the Region.





*EPA personnel assess tanks at the Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority (PRASA) Filtration Plant in Patillas, P. R.*

## EMERGENCY RESPONSE

### 2020 PUERTO RICO EARTHQUAKES

Beginning at the end of December 2019 and continuing well into 2020, the southwestern part of the island of Puerto Rico experienced an earthquake swarm, including six earthquakes that were of magnitude 5 or greater. The largest and most damaging of this sequence was a magnitude 6.4 earthquake on January 7, 2020. As a result, EPA conducted proactive and strategic engagement with its federal and public sector partners as well as the government of Puerto Rico while highlighting the foundation for a strong, resilient recovery that assures the protection of public health and the environment.

EPA worked under a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) mission assignment focused on lending aid to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and Puerto Rico government agencies as they assessed water infrastructure. The vast majority of the population of Puerto Rico receives their water from a Puerto Rico Aqueduct



*EPA personnel collect a drinking water sample from a system not run by the Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority (PRASA).*

and Sewer Authority (PRASA) system. PRASA also operates numerous wastewater systems throughout the island. There are about 240 non-PRASA community drinking water systems throughout the island, serving about 3% of the population. A number of these do not have generators or other sources of

power; therefore, during power outages, these systems are unable to provide water to their customers.

EPA initially received a FEMA Mission Assignment to support deployment of field teams to assess 30 non-PRASA drinking water systems within six municipalities eligible for Public Assistance, and to facilitate PRASA damage assessment. Eventually an additional eight municipalities were added to the list of those eligible for public assistance. In total EPA field teams assessed 67 non-PRASA systems. The mission included drinking water and wastewater assessment and sampling, and septic system assessment and sampling. EPA identified approximately 30 systems which suffered structural damage from the earthquakes. EPA, together with community entities, non-profit organizations and academic institutions under a Water Coalition, worked to make the necessary repairs to the systems. Since the initial swarm of earthquakes EPA maintained contact with the system operators, contacting them when the initial affected area experiences an earthquake greater than 5.0 in magnitude to ascertain operational status. In addition to the non-PRASA assessment mission, EPA field teams also conducted damage assessments at all facilities storing bulk oil and chemicals in every municipality on the island.



*EPA Incident Command staff briefing at the FEMA office in Ponce, P.R.*



*EPA personnel collect a drinking water sample from a Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority (PRASA) system.*



*Region 2 researcher conducting Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) testing.*



Region 2's Laboratory at EPA's Edison Environmental Center

## RESEARCH FOR A HEALTHIER ENVIRONMENT

### Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) Testing

In 2020, the Region 2 Laboratory expanded the capability of EPA Method 537.1 for the determination of 18 Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) in water, including GenX, to include seven additional PFAS compounds to address a growing list of PFAS's of concern. After developing the method, the laboratory received national accreditation for the expanded EPA Method 537.1, which allows scientists to analyze for 25 PFAS compounds, including GenX, in drinking water, groundwater, surface water and wastewater. This significant achievement provides a robust, accredited method for measuring PFAS compounds in all types of water samples, enhancing support of EPA regionals, including states and territories, in monitoring for PFAS. The laboratory has already used the expanded method to measure PFAS in groundwater and surface water at several Region 2 Superfund sites.



*In February 2020, Region 2 met with the Seneca Nation leadership to review UST inspection findings and to provide compliance assistance.*

## ENSURING ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE

### **Cleanup Order and Settlement Agreements Get Cleanup Underway at Gowanus Canal Superfund site in Brooklyn, NY**

Region 2 completed work on eleven enforcement actions valued at \$175 million for cleanup work and payment of the Agency's past costs. Responsible parties will perform dredging of contaminated sediments, capping within the 100-foot wide, 1.8-mile-long Gowanus Canal, as well as upgrading canal bulkheads to support the dredging and capping.

The enforcement actions related to the dredging and capping cleanup work include a unilateral administrative order valued at \$125 million and nine settlement agreements valued at \$40 million. One additional agreement is for payment of \$10 million to the Agency for their past cleanup costs. Cleanup work within the canal will continue to benefit the redevelopment currently underway in the commercial and residential areas adjacent to the canal.

### **Compliance Assistance for Seneca Nation of Indians**

Technical Assistance was provided to the Seneca Nation of Indians for a Fuel Spill Investigation at the Cattaraugus Territory. The Nation hired outside contractors to investigate the spill and EPA reviewed the findings and provided input from our Agency national expert. Region 2 provided funding to help cover costs associated with the Nation's investigation, including pre-award costs.

## Responding to Environmental Violations in Guayama, Puerto Rico

Under a 2020 settlement with EPA, TAPI Puerto Rico will pay nearly \$540,000 for air pollution violations of the Clean Air Act, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), the Clean Water Act, and the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act. The pharmaceutical manufacturing plant emitted large amounts of toxins in the air and did not maintain wastewater pretreatment systems, which resulted in leaks and overflow of contaminated water at the site.

## Ensuring Proper Cleanup at the Hercules, Inc Superfund site in Gibbstown, New Jersey

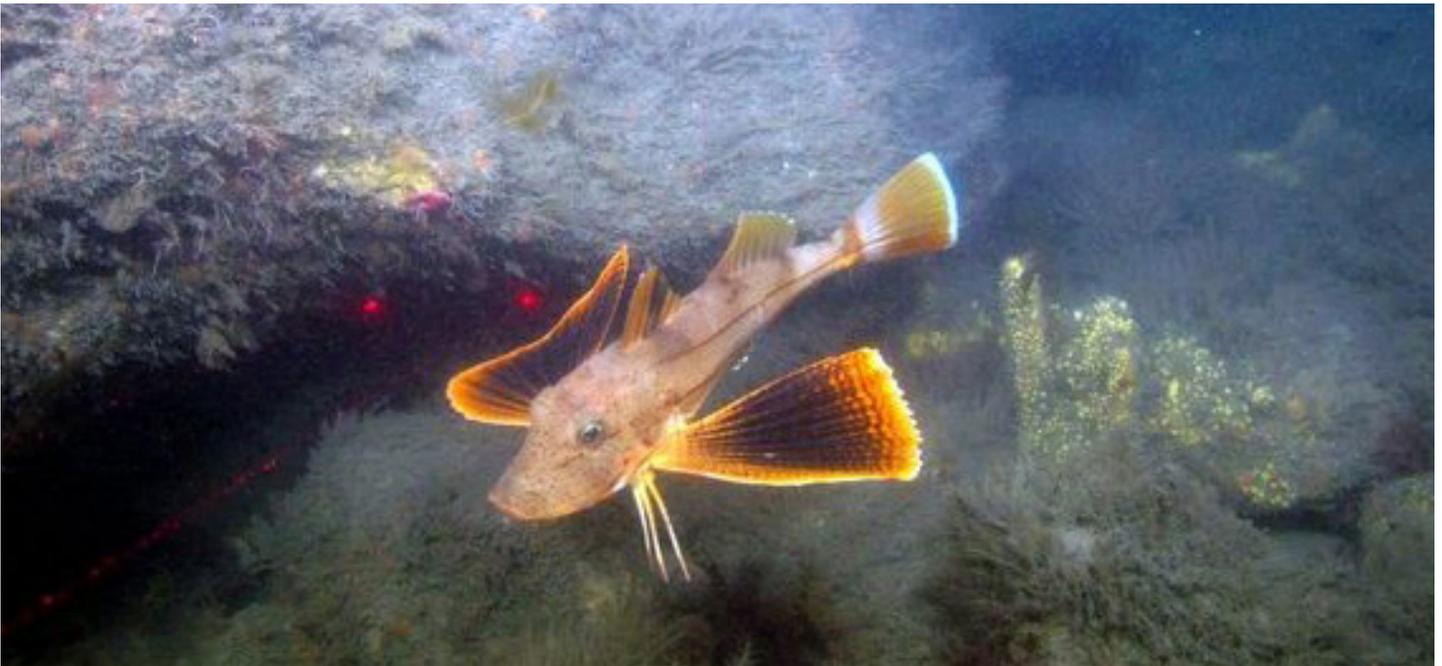
In September, EPA and the State of New Jersey reached a settlement for cleanup at the Hercules, Inc. (Gibbstown Plant) Superfund site. Hercules, Inc. will design and implement the final cleanup remedy selected by EPA in order to address contamination at the Gibbstown Plant. Also, Hercules, Inc agreed to reimbursing EPA with more than \$11 million and New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) with almost \$130,000 for past and estimated future response costs.

## Protecting the Air in Bridgewater, New Jersey

In June, EPA and the State of New Jersey reached a proposed settlement with the Somerset Raritan Valley Sewerage Authority (SRVSA) to resolve alleged violations of the Clean Air Act (CAA) and state permitting requirements for sewage sludge incineration at SRVSA's wastewater facility. SRVSA will pay \$225,000 in penalties for past violations, and more than \$50,000 to implement a Project School Clean Sweeps Mercury Recovery Program. The program aims to collect mercury thermometers and other mercury-containing equipment at five schools in Somerset and Middlesex Counties. .



*Somerset Raritan Valley Sewerage Authority in Bridgewater Township, N.J.*



A fish and plants in the Long Island Sound.

# PROTECTING AMERICA'S WATERS

## THE LONG ISLAND SOUND FUTURES FUND

In December, EPA, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation announced 16 grants totaling \$1.1 million to local governments, nongovernmental organizations and community groups in New York to improve Long Island Sound. The grants were matched by \$2.3 million from the grantees resulting in \$3.4 million in funding for conservation around the Long Island Sound watershed of New York. The Long Island Sound Futures Fund 2020 grants will reach more than 670,000 residents through environmental education programs and conservation projects. Water quality improvement projects will treat 5.4 million gallons of stormwater, install 23,000-square-feet of green infrastructure and prevent 3,000 pounds of nitrogen from entering Long Island Sound. The projects will also open almost 4 river miles and restore over 100 acres of coastal habitat for fish and wildlife.

## REGION 2 URBAN WATER AMBASSADORS

In 2020, Region 2, through our National Estuary Program partnerships, supported Urban Water Ambassadors to reconnect urban communities at the Martín Peña Channel (Caño Martín Peña), the Lower Passaic River and the Bronx & Harlem River Watersheds. These Urban Water Ambassadors serve as local coordinators, facilitators and leaders. They coordinate communities, federal and state agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and businesses to accelerate and prioritize on-the-ground projects in order to improve water quality, restore outdoor spaces and foster community stewardship in urban-related watersheds. These collaborations – between agencies and communities have the potential to improve access to our nation’s waterways, as well as promote local economic, environmental and social benefits.



EPA Region 2's three Urban Waters Ambassadors meet with EPA's regional water team

## WATER INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT

EPA Region 2 worked closely with state, local, tribal and water sector partners to make investments in communities across the nation to improve drinking water and wastewater infrastructure. In May 2020, EPA Region 2 announced a \$16 million Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) loan to the City of Cortland, New York in order to support a portfolio of sewer rehabilitation and water main replacement projects. The WIFIA loan will protect public health and the environment by providing safe drinking water and dependable wastewater services to the already exceeded life of the existing infrastructure. The loan will save the City of Cortland an estimated \$3.5 million compared to typical bond financing, while project construction and operation are expected to create 120 jobs.

In June, EPA Region 2 awarded \$220 million to New York and \$84 million to New Jersey under the Clean Water Act and Safe Drinking Water Act for State Revolving Funds (SRFs). Under the Clean Water



*City of Cortland, N.Y., which has received a \$16 million Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) loan.*

and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund programs, EPA provides funding to all 50 states and Puerto Rico to capitalize SRF loan programs. SRF programs function like infrastructure banks by providing low-interest loans to eligible recipients for drinking water and clean water infrastructure projects. EPA Region 2 awarded \$175 million to the New York Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) and \$45 million to the New York

Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF). In addition, EPA Region 2 awarded \$65 million to the New Jersey CWSRF and \$19 million to the New Jersey DWSRF.

## SEPTIC SYSTEM PARTNERSHIPS IN PUERTO RICO

In September, EPA Region 2 provided training to more than 35 municipalities in Puerto Rico with support from state and local governments, the private sector, communities and academia. SepticSmart Week 2020 encouraged homeowners, wastewater professionals and local officials to design and maintain effective septic systems to safeguard public health, protect the environment and save money. EPA recently invested \$50,000 of contract support to build septic systems management capability in Puerto Rico by developing a proposed framework for a geospatial tool that will help to build capacity for environmental and public health analysis of current and future locations of septic systems, as well as considerations for the new Puerto Rico Building Code compliance assistance and enforcement.

## HOW DO THE STATE REVOLVING FUNDS WORK?

As the loan principal and interest are repaid over time, it allows the state's DWSRF and CWSRF to be recycled or "revolve." As money is returned to the state's revolving loan fund, the state makes new loans to other eligible recipients.

### CLEAN WATER STATE REVOLVING FUND

The CWSRF program provides low-interest loans and principal forgiveness for the improvement of water quality protection infrastructure projects, including modernizing aging wastewater infrastructure, implementing water reuse and recycling and addressing stormwater, which will protect lakes, rivers and the Atlantic Ocean.

### DRINKING WATER STATE REVOLVING FUND

The DWSRF program provides low-interest loans and principal forgiveness for the construction of drinking water infrastructure projects and for the administration of small system technical assistance, source water protection, capacity development, and operator certification. The DWSRF program will protect people's health by reducing exposure to contaminants in drinking water.



*RA Lopez announcing the completion of the Braddock Bay Ecosystem Restoration Project in Greece, N.Y.*

## BRADDOCK BAY ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION PROJECT

In August, Region 2 Administrator Pete Lopez joined the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Buffalo District), the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and the Town of Greece NY to announce the completion of the Braddock Bay Ecosystem Restoration Project in Greece, NY. With funding provided by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, this project improved fish and wildlife habitat, reduced erosion of wetlands and helped create a safe harbor for boaters on Lake

Ontario. In addition, the completion will help revitalize economic opportunities in the Bay area, as well as contribute to the process of removing the Rochester Embayment from the list of Great Lakes "Areas of Concern."

## Spotlight on Region 2 Community Member



*Dr. Qingzhi Zhu from Stony Brook University, N.Y., winner of the Advanced Septic System Nitrogen Sensor Challenge.*

Scientist, Dr. Qingzhi Zhu, from Stony Brook University in Stony Brook, NY and the New York State Center for Clean Water Technology was awarded \$50,000 under the EPA's Advanced Septic System Nitrogen Sensor Challenge, an international competition to advance the development of low-cost sensors to measure nitrogen levels discharged from advanced home septic systems.



*Dr. Qingzhi Zhu's award-winning low-cost nitrogen sensor*



## IMPROVING THE NATION'S AIR

### NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY CLEAN AIR PLANS

EPA Region 2 approved several updates to New York and New Jersey's clean air plans. Under the Clean Air Act, states must update their clean air plan, called a State Implementation Plan (SIP), when national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS) are changed to demonstrate how they will implement, attain, maintain and enforce the new standards. Both New York and New Jersey have updated their SIPs to meet the current federal requirements for various elements and air quality standards. Regionally, over the last 10 years, New York and New Jersey have seen a decrease in the number of unhealthy Air Quality Index days.

### ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE GRANT AWARDED TO HOPE PROGRAM INC.

In October, EPA Region 2 awarded nearly \$120,000 through an Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving (EJCPS) Cooperative Agreement to Hope Program, Inc. located in the Bronx, NY. The EPA funding is supporting the Hope Program's existing implementation of the NYC CoolRoofs program, which provides a training and career support for 70 New Yorkers annually, while reducing emissions of nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter by painting rooftops with a reflective coating that improves buildings' energy efficiency. The project will allow the program to coat an additional 100,000 square feet of rooftops on industrial buildings in the South Bronx, an area facing a particularly heavy environmental burden.



## CLEAN AIR ACT PERMIT FOR LIMETREE BAY FACILITY

After comprehensive review and evaluation of hundreds of comments received during the public hearing and public comment period, EPA has finalized its Clean Air Act Plantwide Applicability Limit permit for the Limetree Bay Terminal and Limetree Bay Refining facility located on St. Croix, United States Virgin Islands. The final permit is issued along with a response to the comments received from the public.

## ENERGY STAR PARTNERSHIP WITH CON EDISON

EPA Region 2 partnered with Con Edison to develop a guide to help New York City restaurants and food stores identify the cost-savings and environmental benefits of energy efficiency. The guide offers restaurants and food stores methods on how to conserve water, reduce food waste, and save energy regarding refrigeration, other restaurant equipment, lighting, heating and cooling.



## REDUCING DIESEL EMISSIONS

In October, three organizations in New York and New Jersey and one organization in Puerto Rico were selected to receive funding for their projects to reduce diesel emissions by replacing engines on a marine ferry and replacing cargo-handling terminal tractors, school buses and short-haul trucks. The Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) National Grants Program funds projects aimed at reducing diesel emissions from the nation's existing fleet of old, dirty engines and vehicles.

- \$1.67 million to the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PANYNJ)
- \$1 million to the Connecticut Maritime Foundation, Inc.
- \$1.1 million to the Bay Shore school district
- \$1.15 million to the University of Puerto Rico



# CHEMICAL SAFETY & SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS MANAGEMENT

## REGION 2 SERVES AS A NATIONAL CENTER OF EXCELLENCE FOR LEAD ABATEMENT PROCESSING

Region 2 served as one of two National Centers of Excellence for the processing of lead abatement discipline applications for individuals. Region 2 processed 1,146 individual lead abatement applications during the 2020 Fiscal Year. Region 2 accredited and re-accredited training providers for lead abatement disciplines and the Renovation, Repair and Painting (RRP) programs. The webinar training mendments were a new process and were closely coordinated with EPA Headquarters. Region 2 is one of three regions to offer this. Region 2 conducted nearly 25 inspections to enforce the federal RRP and Disclosure Rules across Region 2 and the Lead Based Paint Activities (Abatement) Rule in NY and the USVI. Region 2 and the Department of Justice filed a complaint in April 2020, alleging that the defendants repeatedly violated lead-based paint regulations in over 20 residences. The District Court for the Eastern District of NY granted EPA's request for a preliminary injunction against defendants Wayne Gladney and Precision Consulting Inc. (a firm that performs lead-based paint abatements and renovations in the New York City area).



*EPA's Water Infrastructure Fund Transfer Act (WIFTA) is supporting a drinking water lead abatement project in N.J.*

## PESTICIDES PROGRAM

Region 2 continued to provide outreach materials on pesticide safety and COVID-19, proper cleaning and disinfection and indoor air quality to all public schools in NY, NJ and the USVI. Along with the educational materials, Region 2 also provided EPA webinar invitations on proper disinfection and cleaning and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and COVID-19. In addition, Region 2 reached out to health departments and community groups offering assistance during COVID on other pesticide related issues such as bed bugs, ticks and integrated pest management.

## SUPPORTING POLLUTION PREVENTION

On the 30th anniversary of the Pollution Prevention Act in November of 2020, EPA Region 2 awarded a Source Reduction Assistance Grant of \$175,000 to the New York State Pollution Prevention Institute (NYSP21) at Rochester Institute of Technology. This grant will provide pollution prevention training to over 200 wineries in Western and Central New York State. Each grantee will collect baseline data and create a sustainability workbook and self-assessment checklist that will assist wineries in reducing energy and water consumption, wastewater, hazardous material releases and saving money.



## AMERICA RECYCLES 2020

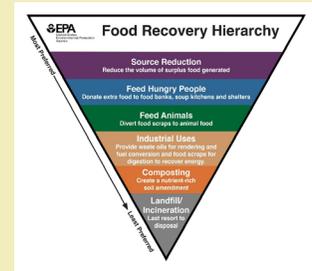
EPA set a national goal to raise the recycling rate to 50% by the year 2030. In addition to the new national goal, EPA held the America Recycles Innovation Fair and America Recycles Summit showcasing advances in recycling while also bringing together organizations and individuals interested in making a difference. Regional Administrator, Pete Lopez was joined by Japanese Ambassador to the United States, Shinsuke Sugiyama to highlight the importance of building coalitions with different stakeholders including government and private sectors to incentivize with increased recycling, establish national markets and analyze recent waste characterization studies to identify and address opportunities and barriers.



## FOOD RECOVERY CHALLENGE

Five New York and New Jersey based organizations applied innovative approaches and engaged in a variety of practical cost-effective actions and best practices to prevent and reduce food waste.

- Rock and Wrap It Up! (Cedarhurst, NY)
- The Golub Corporation (Price Chopper, Market 32, market Bistro) (Schenectady, NY)
- Wegmans Food Market (Rochester, NY)
- Ravitz Family Markets (Cherry Hill, NJ)
- Raritan Valley Community College (North branch, NJ)



*Sustainable management of food, food recovery hierarchy infographic*



*Wegmans Food Market minimizing food waste at the source.*



*Rock and Wrap It Up! Food Recovery Challenge logo*



*Golub Corporation in Schenectady, N.Y. engages over 13,000 store teammates to collect tons of non-saleable, but edible, fresh food.*



*Ravitz Family Markets in Cherry Hill, N.J. offering children free pieces of overripe fruit, preventing food waste through donation.*



*RA Lopez and Mayor Jose Aponte Dalmau meeting to discuss how to tackle solid waste management in P.R.*

## PARTNERSHIPS

### 2020 PUERTO RICO RECOVERY

In August 2020, EPA senior officials visited Puerto Rico in order to foster collaboration between senior U.S. officials, the Puerto Rico government, municipalities, the business community, and non-profit and community organizations. These partnerships are focused on tackling challenges remaining in Puerto Rico’s continued efforts in order to improve environmental infrastructure and pool resources for resilient environmental programs.

EPA Associate Deputy Administrator Doug Benevento, Rear Admiral Peter Brown, EPA Region 2 Administrator Pete Lopez, and EPA Region 4 Administrator Mary Walker toured pharmaceutical facilities, held a brownfields roundtable and visited two landfills to highlight critical solid waste needs across Puerto Rico. EPA’s experience and multisectoral efforts in disaster recovery have been a resource and model for others. Infrastructure projects funded to Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority (PRASA) and various municipalities through the clean water and drinking water Puerto Rico State Revolving Funds, supplemental funding through the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, Brownfields funding, among other sources continue to be a vital resource in rebuilding and maintaining human health and the environment.



*Rear Admiral Brown visits Community Drinking Water System Parcelas de Cañaboncito Non-PRASA System with representatives from EPA, Puerto Rico,, Asocaguas, the Water Coalition and the Mayor of Caguas William Miranda Torres.*

## EMPOWERING RURAL COMMUNITY WATER SYSTEMS IN PUERTO RICO

In August, EPA Associate Deputy Administrator Doug Benevento and EPA Regional Administrator Pete Lopez announced that EPA will provide critically needed circuit rider technical support to 45 community-owned drinking water systems in rural Puerto Rico. The assistance is part of EPA's Circuit Rider program. The Circuit Rider program supports EPA's strategic goal of a 25 percent reduction in the number of Community Water Systems that are out of compliance with health-based standards by the end of Fiscal Year 2022.

Professional experts will provide technical assistance to 45 of the 240 systems serving about 100,000 Puerto Rico residents in communities across the island that rely on drinking water sources from pumps, wells, and surface water. The communities that own these systems are not part of The Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority (PRASA) and these small community-owned systems are typically operated by residents with limited resources. Even before the 2017 hurricanes and subsequent earthquakes, these systems faced severe economic and technical challenges providing water to their communities. The assistance announced today will further empower these systems.

## 2020 U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS RECOVERY

In August 2020, Region 2 Regional Administrator Pete Lopez and EPA Associate Deputy Administrator Doug Benevento also visited the U.S. Virgin Islands with a focus on the challenges and successes of the continuing U.S. Virgin Islands recovery work, forging partnerships and finding ways to further support those efforts. Headlining the visit was the award of \$10 million in funding under the Bipartisan Budget Act to support the U.S. Virgin Islands' broad efforts to address its solid waste crisis. Following the funding announcement, the trip continued with a visit to the Frederiksted Waterline Rehabilitation project, led by VIDPNR Commissioner Oriol and other key representatives. The visit concluded with EPA officials joining Ann Hanley, the Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority (VIWMA) Acting Director as they toured the Anguilla Landfill and Anguilla Wastewater Treatment plant.



*EPA Associate Deputy Administrator Doug Benevento and RA Lopez announce a \$10 million award to help the U.S. Virgin Islands government develop long-term hazardous and solid waste management solutions.*

## WORKING WITH TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

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*Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe leadership visit EPA in N.Y. for to discuss their Performance Partnership Grant.*

When the Covid-19 pandemic struck, our Indian Nation partners took actions and implemented measures in their communities similar to other communities in New York. The nations cancelled all public gatherings, closed governmental buildings and tribal casinos, quarantined nation lands, and laid off the non-essential work force. The economic, cultural and spiritual impacts were significant. Environmental program staff were reduced to 10 to 20 percent of their original capacity resulting in the unavailability of staff with the expertise to address specific EPA work. To date, they are still only at 60 percent capacity. In-person consultations were unable to be held with nation leadership.

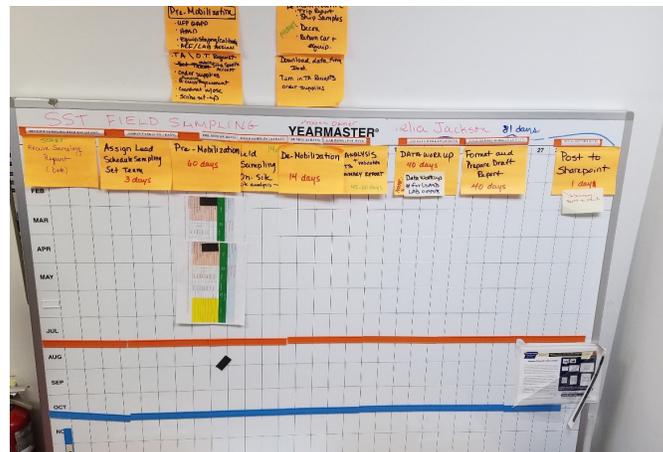
The Region adapted to these challenges and worked “virtually” with the nations and their leadership in addressing our joint priorities. Consultations continued with our Indian nation partners even though not held in person. Region 2 teamed up with EPA Region 3 to consult with the Seneca Nation of Indians to consult on three Commonwealth of Pennsylvania water matters that were of interest to the Seneca Nation of Indians. We also held multiple formal consultations with the Shinnecock Indian Nation on the resolution of a dumping matter on Shinnecock lands.

Technical Assistance was provided to the Seneca Nation of Indians for a Fuel Spill Investigation at the Cattaraugus Territory. The Nation hired outside contractors to investigate the spill and EPA reviewed the findings and provided input from our Agency national expert. Region 2 provided funding to help cover costs associated with the Nation’s investigation, including pre-award costs.

Our ongoing EPA, NYSDEC and Onondaga Nation consultations continued for the numerous superfund sub-sites surrounding Onondaga Lake. Superfund remedial activities under cooperative agreements with the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe (SRMT) were delayed to the necessity for establishing Covid-19 protocols that met the requirements of EPA, New York State and SRMT because many contractors came from out of the state. Region 2 worked with the SRMT to get these protocols in place to protect the human health of all at the sites. These protocols were also used at other sites of interests for the nations in Central and Western New York State.

# EPA's ENVIRONMENTAL LEAN MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

EPA has implemented the Environmental Lean Management System (ELMS) to 83% of the agency across the United States. ELMS is an agency-wide systematic approach to continuous process improvement. It is based on lean principles comprised of six components: visual management, standard process, cascading performance measures, problem solving, business reviews & huddles, and leader behaviors. Region 2 employees and managers are using ELMS to track and improve 76 processes. These processes, in different stages of implementation, focus on a range of issues, including hiring staff, responding to public inquiries, laboratory work, superfund cleanups, enhancements to enforcement, state clean air plan approvals, grants, and internal services for employees.



An ELMS Flow Board at the R2 Edison Laboratory.

## Highlighting ELMS Accomplishments

### Reporting of Chemical Results

The Region has successfully streamlined the reporting of chemical results for Superfund sampling projects. Region 2 has achieved a 33% improvement in the time to produce the sampling report. Additionally, the average number of days to produce the sampling reports was cut in half.

### Information Request Letter Authority

Issuing an information request letter authority under the Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act is an important part of identifying potentially responsible parties who can perform or fund response actions at Superfund sites. Region 2's goal was to reduce the average length of time by at least 25% (to 183 days) by September 30, 2020. Using ELMS, the average length of the process is now 92 days – an improvement of 62%.

### Reducing Backlog of National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permits in Puerto Rico

Region 2 developed a system of remote huddles to allow staff in New York and San Juan to meet and track permit issuance. The team also implemented new information sharing practices with the PR Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (PRDNER), including re-instituting quarterly check-ins and developed an expansive SharePoint site that allows EPA and PRDNER to update permit information in real time. From October 2018 to September 2020, the team reduced the permit backlog by 88%.

### Five Year Reviews

EPA reviews the effectiveness of its cleanups at sites every five years. The Region completed 68% of the Five-Year Reviews by the end of the third quarter in 2020, which was a 66% improvement over 2019. By moving these reviews earlier in the year, staff and manager have more time to focus on drafting these documents and resolving any issues that may affect the protectiveness of the cleanup work.

# CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

## CHILDREN'S HEALTH FUNDING

In celebration of Children's Health Month in October, EPA announced an award total of \$290,000 in EPA funding through the agency's FY 2020 Children's Healthy Learning Environments Grant Initiative. The New York State Department of Health (NYS DOH) was selected to receive \$145,000 to expand the statewide the *Clean, Green, and Healthy Schools Program*. The multi-disciplinary program provides resources to school employees, students, and parents best practices to increase knowledge and empower school occupants to improve their school's environmental health. The project is expected to reach all 4,433 schools in the 700+ school districts across New York State, including New York City, the largest school district in the country. Adoption of this school environmental health program will improve environmental conditions in school buildings across New York and support improved health, attendance, and academic performance for approximately 3.2 million school aged children.



## LEAD TESTING IN SCHOOLS GRANT

This year, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services announced that it will use grant money to implement a program of voluntary testing for lead in drinking water at local schools and child-care centers. In May 2020, EPA awarded New York and New Jersey nearly \$2 million and more than \$1.5 million, respectively to enable the two states to conduct lead testing using EPA's Training, Testing and Taking Action (3Ts) program in schools and childcare centers not currently covered by state regulatory requirements. This includes approximately 4,200 licensed childcare centers in New Jersey, and a high percentage of the approximately 14,000 licensed childcare centers (serving approximately 320,000 children) in New York, with a focus on providing testing for centers in low-income areas. The 2020 allotments for WIIN 2107 funds in Region 2 are as follows:

- New York: \$1,159,000
- New Jersey: \$476,000
- Puerto Rico: \$182,000
- US Virgin Islands: \$56,000



## SPOTLIGHT ON NEWARK, NJ: LEAD EXPOSURE REDUCTION

Newark is a community burdened with a number of health concerns previously exacerbated by drinking water contaminated with dangerous levels of lead. There is no safe level of lead exposure. Pregnant women and children are most at risk. Since 2018, EPA has worked closely with the City of Newark and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) to protect residents from elevated lead levels in drinking water. EPA Region 2, EPA's Office of Research and Development (ORD), NJDEP, and the City of Newark collaborated to determine the best approach for reducing lead levels in tap water in the affected areas of Newark until corrosion control treatment could be effective again.

Newark has undertaken what is very likely to be the nation's most aggressive lead service line replacement program. Using funding from the EPA State Revolving Fund (SRF) and from an Essex County bond program, Newark began a program in March 2019 to replace all lead service lines (LSLs) in the city over the next 24 to 30 months. As of September 2020, over 14,000 LSLs of the approximately 18,000 LSLs in the city have been replaced. In June 2020, the Water Infrastructure Fund Transfer Act (WIFTA) allowed EPA Region 2 and New Jersey to transfer funds from their Clean Water SRF to their Drinking Water SRF of nearly \$110 million to fund drinking water lead abatement projects. EPA is strongly committed to continuing its long-standing and close collaboration with Newark and NJDEP to strengthen the city's capacity to ensure that Newark area residents can continue to receive clean drinking water.

In 2020, the Newark Board of Education in New Jersey was selected to receive \$7.5 million in federal funds in order to combat lead in Newark schools under the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act's *Reduction in Lead Exposure via Drinking Water*. This grant will help fund the Newark Safe Water Initiative, which improves public health by reducing sources of lead in school drinking water. The project will include an educational component, allowing for EPA Region 2 to conduct outreach and public education in order to raise awareness of the health effects of lead in drinking water and ways to reduce lead exposure. This is projected to benefit more than 36,000 students in pre-Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade as well as 6,000 employees across 64 schools.



U.S. Representative Donald M. Payne Jr., Newark Water/Sewer Director Kareem Adeem, Mayor Ras Baraka of the City of Newark, Superintendent Roger Leon, U.S. Representative Albio Sires, EPA Senior Counsel Jess Kramer, RA Lopez announce the \$7.5 million in funding.

# RECOGNIZING ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERS

EPA recognized many of our partners for their efforts leading the way to a healthier future for communities across the country.

## SMARTWAY FREIGHT PARTNER EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Canon USA, Inc. (Huntington, NY)  
Lindenmeyr Munroe (Purchase, NY)  
Johnson & Johnson (New Brunswick, NJ)  
System Freight, Inc. (Jamesburg, NJ)



EPA Region 2 honored four truck carriers, logistics providers and freight shippers as industry leaders in saving fuel, shrinking their emissions footprints, and contributing to healthier air in the communities they serve.



## WATERSENSE EXCELLENCE AWARD

EPA awarded **SUEZ North America** in New York as a 2020 WaterSense Excellence Award winner for being a leader in water efficiency and conservation efforts.

## SAFER CHOICE PARTNER OF THE YEAR

EPA Region 2 recognized **BASF Home Care and I&I Cleaning Solutions (BASF)** in Florham Park, NJ as well as **Wegmans Food Markets** in Rochester, NY for achievement in the design, manufacture, selection, and use of products with safer chemicals which advances innovative source reduction.

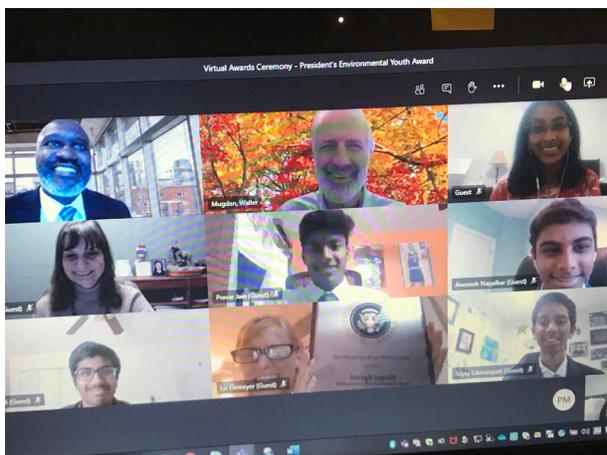


# INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERS

As we look forward to 50 more years of protecting public health and the environment, we recognize and support the next generation of environmental leaders in our region.

## President's Environmental Youth Award

As we look forward to 50 more years of protecting public health and the environment, we recognize and support the next generation of environmental leaders in our region. During the 50th anniversary



of Earth Day in May 2020, EPA and the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) announced five students from Bridgewater High School in New Jersey won the President's Environmental Youth Award. The five student winners are Sujay Edavalapati, Pravar Jain, Amogh Jupalli, Aneesh Nagalkar, and Ritika Thomas. The students also fostered relationships with Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resources Program and the Raritan Headwaters Association.

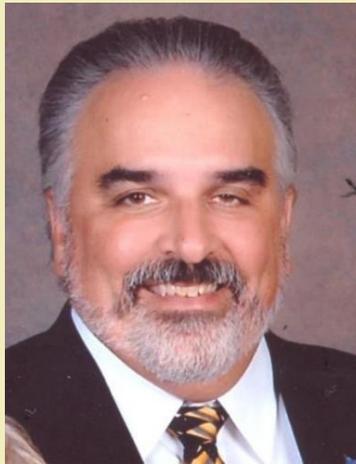
*Deputy Regional Administrator, Walter Mugdan, presenting award to the PEYA winners from Bridgewater, NJ*



*Students from Bridgewater High School in N.J. who won the 2020 President's Environmental Youth Award (PEYA)*

# IN MEMORIAM

*The 2020 Annual Report is dedicated in memory of our colleague Eric J. Mosher*



## **Eric J. Mosher**

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In 2020, EPA Region 2 lost a valued and beloved member of its family and we dedicate this report and all of our accomplishments to his memory. Eric J. Mosher held the position of Response & Prevention Branch Chief for EPA Region 2 from 2003 until the time of his death. After earning his bachelor's degree from the Coast Guard Academy, he proudly served in the U.S. Coast Guard for 20 years. He dedicated his life to public service.

As a member of the USCG Atlantic Strike Team, Eric was critical to EPA's mission during the 9/11 response. He was the Principal Management official in numerous Region 2 emergency responses including Hurricanes Irene and Lee, Superstorm Sandy, the Methyl Bromide incident in USVI, as well as during Hurricanes Irma and Maria and the 2020 Earthquakes in Puerto Rico. Eric was the EPA Management representative for many National Workgroups including the Homeland Security Collaborative Network, IT Forum, and was the Response & Prevention Branch representative in the Regional Incident Coordination Team (RICT) Group. He was also the co-chair for the Region 2 Regional Response Team (RRT) and Caribbean Regional Response Team (CRRT).

In celebration of his life, EPA's Regional Response Center in Edison, New Jersey will be named in Eric Mosher's memory. Eric's legacy will forever endure due to his passion for his work as well as his dedication to his colleagues and the greater Region 2 community.



*Eric Mosher serving in the U.S. Coast Guard.*



Progress for a Stronger Future

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