



EPA Region 2 2019 Year in Review

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Cover photo: Boquette River Keene, New York Photo credit Dan Montella, EPA Region 2

Back cover photo: Franklin Parker Preserve Woodland, New Jersey. Photo credit Dan Montella, EPA Region 2

EPA Publication Number: 902R20001

NOTE FROM THE REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR

I am proud and honored to be able to share this 2019 report, which includes some of our most recent projects and accomplishments. EPA's mission is to protect people's health and the environment – surely one of the most important missions there is, and one I am proud to serve. From cleaning up contaminated properties to ensuring drinking water sources are safe, EPA Region 2 has delivered a cleaner, safer, and healthier environment for future generations.

Highlighting our work is important because it helps people understand how we collectively engage in solving environmental challenges in their communities and offers the opportunity to more closely partner with us to promote stewardship and sustainability.

EPA's Region 2 is a very diverse region – we serve New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and eight federally recognized Indian Nations -- all with their own unique environmental concerns and priorities. Over the past year, we have worked in close collaboration with our state, territory, and tribal partners to achieve real environmental results. Most importantly, we have been working hand-in-hand with communities, respecting local home rule, and empowering them to have a voice in the work that we do. With a focus on community-driven efforts, we are supporting locally-led solutions to environmental concerns. In this proactive form of engagement, we also look for opportunities to strengthen local skills and abilities to ensure our joint efforts endure and are sustainable.

As a life-long public servant, I have a deep appreciation for the importance of serving communities and for the hard work and dedication of my EPA colleagues here in Region 2, who are passionate and take their mission very much to heart. I'm honored to highlight our collective work and look forward to celebrating more accomplishments in years to come.



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Peter". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Sincerely,

Peter D. Lopez

2019 IN NUMBERS



78

Factsheets Produced to Update Communities on Individual Superfund Sites



44

Public Meetings



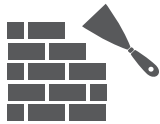
69

Community Advisory Group Meetings Attended



46

Five-year Reviews of Superfund Remedy Protectiveness Completed



20

Communities Received Support to Understand Technical Reports or Cleanup Plans for Superfund Sites



\$429,256,717

Awarded through Grants



33

Public notices published



2

Superfund Construction Completions



14,566

Followers on Twitter (@eparegion2)



118

Press Releases Issued



11

Superfund Sites Ready for Their Anticipated Use



Over 200

Engagements with Congressional Offices



1368

On-site Inspections to Evaluate Compliance with Applicable Environmental Statutes and Regulations



50

Press Events



18

Superfund Removal Completions



470

Freedom of Information Act Requests Processed



16

Records of Decision on Superfund Cleanup Signed (Plus one ROD Amendment)



39

New Hires



32

Retirees

HURRICANES IRMA AND MARIA RECOVERY



Puerto Rico

In September 2017, Hurricanes Irma and Maria took hundreds of lives and devastated basic infrastructure – electricity, sewage treatment plants, potable water supply systems, roadways and medical facilities – in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Nearly four million residents were left without power for months and the destruction overwhelmed the local governments. Supporting one of the largest post-disaster reconstruction and humanitarian efforts in U.S. history posed unique challenges and EPA is continuing its efforts to help the Caribbean recover from the long-term impacts of these disasters.

Region 2's comprehensive, heavily subscribed engagement will be the foundation for a strong, resilient recovery that assures the protection of public health and the environment, as well as the preparation for another hurricane season. The viability of EPA's recovery work relies heavily on the relationships that we have with our partners. EPA will continue to build on our partnerships with the governments of Puerto Rico and the USVI, local communities, and non-governmental and professional organizations, among others.



Conducting waste characterizations study in the U.D. Virgin Islands to improve management and reduction of waste.

Hurricanes Irma and Maria generated more than 12 million cubic yards of debris, which crippled an already strained solid waste infrastructure in Puerto Rico. In response, EPA awarded \$6.2 million to the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (DNER) as the first installment of a \$40 million grant for hazardous and solid waste management financial assistance. EPA's approval and financial backing of DNER's waste management work plan will help Puerto Rico improve the post-storm management of landfills, and develop a long-term sustainable solid waste program that addresses historic shortcomings and increases preparedness for managing waste from future storms.

As part of its continuing efforts in the USVI, a municipal solid waste characterization field study, funded by EPA and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), was recently completed, and the University of the Virgin Islands is preparing the results. This study is the first step in developing and updating waste management programs and evaluating ways to reduce and manage waste and cut disposal costs. In addition to helping create an integrated waste management program, the data collected will inform the government of the U.S. Virgin Islands in its efforts to craft recycling policies.

EPA continues to partner with federal and USVI government agencies to advance recovery strategies for the USVI. Access to clean drinking water and supporting the reconstruction of wastewater infrastructure remain a top priority, along with work to address solid waste management issues, indoor air quality and mold remediation, and the collection of medical wastes exacerbated by the hurricanes. EPA's goals are to provide assistance to the Government of the USVI to: make sure that infrastructure recovery projects and efforts consider and address key environmental needs; meet requirements and standards; build preparedness and capacity to mitigate future events; and promote economically sustainable and resilient rebuilding.

To support the development of renewable energy, Region 2 conducted a solar assessment study in Culebra, Puerto Rico with the Department of Energy's National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) and the University of Puerto Rico in Mayaguez. Based on the results of the study, Puerto Rico's Economic Development Administration (EDA) awarded \$4.1 million to the Community Foundation of Puerto Rico in April to fund its proposal for the design and installation of a solar photovoltaic microgrid system in Culebra, Puerto Rico. EDA also awarded a \$3.8 million grant to both PathStone and The Solar Foundation in September for the development and implementation of an island-wide solar technician curriculum operating from five strategic centers. Our ability to convene and coach groups involved in this effort led to the first-ever solar technician training program in Puerto Rico.

As part of EPA's recovery support to the more than 240 community water systems in Puerto Rico, EPA Region 2 signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with seven non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to enhance resiliency and sustainability at these private drinking water systems, which are located in geographically remote parts of the island. Representatives from the Puerto Rico Community Foundation Water Mission International, Puerto Rico Science, Research and Technology Trust, American Red Cross, OXFAM, and Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico signed this MOU that has leveraged more than \$13 million in private funds from these NGOs to help these small drinking water systems not managed by the Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority (PRASA). This agreement is a great example of federal agencies working together with the local government, nonprofits and the private sector to provide drinking water to rural communities. Through the implementation of this MOU and its creation of a Water Coalition, EPA and its partners are providing support in developing resiliency through sustainable planning, energy/water efficiency and renewable energy in delivering safe drinking water. The Water Coalition is also providing technical assistance and/or training regarding ways to make the community drinking water systems more sustainable and resilient to extreme weather events, in collaboration with USDA Rural Development, which has funded important Circuit Rider Programs. The Water Coalition has also developed and supported specific academic projects and programs that investigate and apply design standards and technologies to achieve sustainability in the community drinking water systems. EPA will continue leading the efforts of the Water Coalition, in direct collaboration with its diverse group of partners, including the Puerto Rico Department of Health.



Puerto Rico Environmental Research Laboratory

Because the Puerto Rico Environmental Research Laboratory (PRERL) did not have the analytical capability to support the three ambient water monitoring networks in Puerto Rico – lakes, coastal, and groundwater – EPA's Region 2 Laboratory provided analytical assistance. Over the last three years, EPA's lab helped PRERL develop the capability to independently analyze for additional contaminants – chlorophyll-a, pesticides, total nitrogen, total phosphorus and trace metals – into its monitoring networks.

At the end of October, EPA visited the ambient air monitoring stations operated by the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (DNER) to verify that air monitoring instruments purchased through a grant from FEMA were deployed. EPA visited eight of the eleven field sites in Puerto Rico where monitoring for gaseous pollutants (ozone, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, and nitrogen oxide) is taking place, and audited the instruments operated by DNER at the agency's central electronics laboratory in San Juan.

EPA also administers other grant programs, including the Brownfields grants program, which can provide additional support during the recovery process, such as workforce development, local Brownfields redevelopment planning; assessment of potential Brownfields sites; and cleanup of Brownfields sites. During the last year, EPA has conducted a number of capacity building and training workshops in grant opportunities to local governments, municipalities and non-government organizations in Puerto Rico and the USVI. The viability of EPA's recovery work relies heavily on the relationships that we have with our partners. EPA will continue to build on its partnerships with the Governments of Puerto Rico and the USVI, local communities, other federal agencies and non-governmental and professional organizations, among others.



Inspecting an air monitoring station in Puerto Rico to ensure proper operations after Hurricanes Maria and Irma.

Financial Assistance for Clean and Safe Water

By restructuring over \$500 million in Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority (PRASA) loans with the Puerto Rico State Revolving Fund (SRF) programs, SRF funds became available for use by PRASA to finance drinking water and wastewater projects beginning in Federal Fiscal Year 2019 after a hiatus of several years. Our efforts ensured that Puerto Rico's Clean Water and Drinking Water SRF programs with PRASA continue to be a viable source of water infrastructure financing for the benefit of the people of Puerto Rico.

IMPROVING AIR QUALITY



Servicing the RadNet monitor in Edison, New Jersey.

Enhancing Real-Time Radiation Monitoring

The Region 2 Edison RadNet monitor is one of 140 monitors in a national monitoring network providing the public with critical near-real-time data on ambient radiation levels. The monitor must be serviced every 200 hours to avoid the loss of data. In order to enhance the Agency's ability to operate the monitor, Region 2 trained a new team of operators in 2019 and established a schedule for servicing the RadNet station to ensure uninterrupted data collection. These efforts were essential to keep the Edison RadNet monitor operating and able to provide critical data on ambient radiation levels to the public.

Showing Progress in Air Quality

In August, EPA made a decision based on monitoring and air quality modeling that Warren County, New Jersey now meets the national air quality standard for Sulfur Dioxide (SO₂). That area of New Jersey had previously been impacted by facilities in Pennsylvania, causing exceedances in SO₂ levels. A combination of better pollution controls and power being generated by cleaner power plants caused a dramatic improvement in air quality in this area of New Jersey over the past several decades.

Making the Process for State Air Planning More Efficient

Region 2 was facing a very large backlog of plans developed by the states and submitted for review by EPA, called State Implementation Plans (SIPs). In particular, the region had about 50 of these SIPs submitted by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC); these were specific plans to be applied to particular types of facilities, i.e., power plants, coating operations, paper production, glass manufacturing and cement plants. Because the plans called for controls that needed to meet specific requirements, EPA trained a team of reviewers on how to assess these requirements. In 2019 that team reviewed all 50 backlogged submittals from New York and was able to return 38 of them to the State for further modification. The team is continuing to address the remaining 12 SIPs and to work closely with the NYSDEC to process those SIPs and any other source-specific SIPs that are submitted.

Protecting Our Kids

EPA continued its work to protect kids from polluting school buses in 2019. EPA awarded rebates through EPA's Diesel Emissions Reduction Act School Bus Rebate Program totaling \$725,000 to replace thirty-nine older diesel school buses in New York, New Jersey and Puerto Rico to achieve significant reductions in children's exposure to harmful emissions. Six selected applicants (school districts or private bus companies) will receive rebates between \$15,000 and \$20,000 per bus to replace older, pre-2007 buses with new, cleaner models. These include buses that run on cleaner gasoline or propane instead of diesel. In addition, in 2019 the Bay Shore Union Free School District utilized a \$695,000 Diesel Emission Reduction Act (DERA) grant from EPA to replace four older diesel buses with new zero-emission battery-electric models. School bus replacements funded through the School Bus Rebate Program and DERA grant programs reduce emissions and exposure to particulate matter and nitrogen oxides for children at schools, bus stops, and on the buses themselves, reducing pollutants that are linked to health problems such as asthma and lung damage.



Deputy Regional Administrator Walter Mugdan examining the equipment under the hood of an electric school bus purchased through a Diesel Emissions Reduction Act grant awarded to the Bay Shore school district in New York.

PROVIDING CLEAN AND SAFE DRINKING WATER

Nitrogen Reductions in Long Island Sound:

Through the Long Island Sound Study, Region 2 has been working to reduce nitrogen pollution to Long Island Sound. Nitrogen pollution reduces dissolved oxygen to unhealthy levels for aquatic life (a condition known as hypoxia), and contributes to harmful algal blooms and loss of tidal wetlands and seagrasses. The actions to reduce nitrogen pollution in Long Island Sound have yielded dramatic results, and the effort has reached an important milestone. Through infrastructure investments of more than \$2.5 billion to improve wastewater treatment, the total nitrogen load to Long Island Sound is now more than 42 million pounds less than the annual discharge in early 1991 (Figure 1). Between 2015 and 2019, the peak area of hypoxic waters in Long Island Sound averaged 89 square miles, less than half the pre-2000 average of 205 square miles (Figure 2). This represents a major improvement in water quality in response to an aggressive, long-term effort to reduce nitrogen pollution.

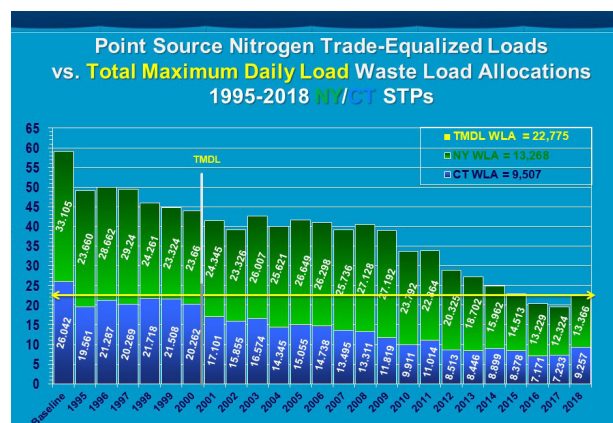


Figure 1

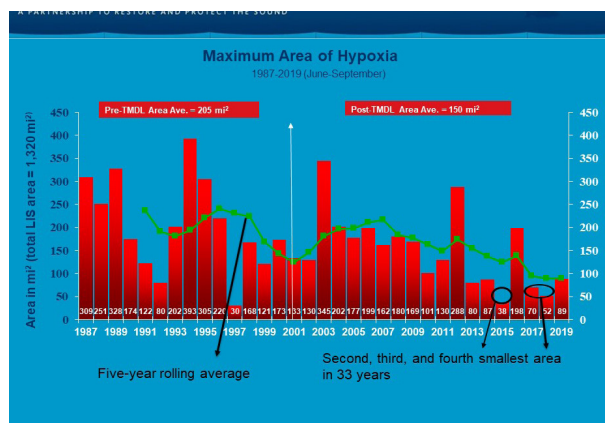
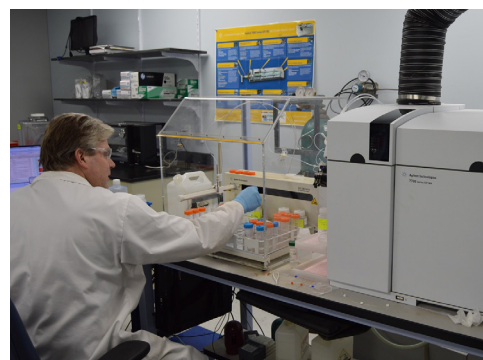


Figure 2

Newark Drinking Water Support

Protecting public health, especially the health of our families and children, is one of EPA's top priorities. Since July 2019, EPA has been coordinating closely with the City of Newark and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) to determine if drinking water filters provided by Newark are reducing lead in tap water to levels of 10 ppb or below, under the current conditions in Newark, when the filters are properly installed and maintained. The collaborative work conducted by our agencies was able to provide valuable information demonstrating that a combination of flushing (with filters in the off position)



Utilizing the Inductively Coupled Plasma Mass Spectrometer to analyze Newark drinking water for lead.

and proper use of filters is the appropriate approach in Newark for reduction of lead levels in tap water in the Pequannock service area until the city's corrosion control treatment is optimized. 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 and safe drinking water.

Safeguarding Drinking Water for Over Eight Million People

In May, EPA Region 2 and the U.S. Department of Justice reached an important legal agreement with the City of New York settling violations resulting from its longstanding failure to cover the Hillview Reservoir located in Yonkers, New York. The legal agreement, called a consent decree, requires the City to cover this finished water reservoir and make associated improvements at an estimated cost of over \$3 billion.

"New York City failed to comply with Safe Drinking Water Act requirements that keep drinking water safe from harmful bacteria and viruses, even when it was under an order to do so," said EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler. "EPA will ensure the City complies with the decree and takes the necessary steps to prevent its drinking water from harming the health of its residents."

The Hillview Reservoir is part of New York City's public water system, which delivers up to a billion gallons of water a day to more than 8 million people. It is an open storage facility and is the last stop for drinking water before it enters the city's water tunnels for distribution to city residents. Although the water is disinfected before reaching Hillview, because the reservoir is uncovered the water is subject to recontamination before entering the distribution network.



Hillview Reservoir, in Yonkers, New York, which is part of New York City's public water system.

In addition, under the consent decree, the city will pay a civil penalty of \$1 million for its past violations of federal requirements. The consent decree also requires the city to pay a \$50,000 penalty to New York State, and spend about \$200,000 to implement a state project to ensure continuous, resilient operations of the entire City water supply system.

REVITALIZING LAND AND PREVENTING CONTAMINATION IN NEW YORK



Dredging in the Upper Hudson River in New York.

Hudson River

This year, EPA continued to address contamination along the Upper Hudson River by overseeing a comprehensive investigation of Polychlorinated Biphenyl contamination present on the river banks and adjacent land as a result of river flooding. The investigation, being performed by General Electric (GE) under a legal agreement with EPA, includes the 43-mile stretch of the Hudson River floodplain from Hudson Falls to Troy, NY. The comprehensive study of the Upper Hudson River floodplain includes an evaluation of human and ecological risks, and an assessment of cleanup options for the area. GE, in coordination with EPA, has been arranging for access to sample and assess parcels of land. More than 8,000 samples have already been taken to support this effort. The sample results are used both to decide if any immediate action should be taken and to inform the long-term overall cleanup plan that will be developed for the floodplain. EPA is prioritizing assessment of land in floodplain areas where community projects are planned. These efforts include EPA's ongoing coordination with community groups and municipalities to identify priority projects to minimize the potential for project delays due to the possible presence of PCBs in site soil and sediment.

EPA also began its work this year to further assess the Lower Hudson River stretching from Albany to New York City. An initial assessment from the 1990s indicated that PCBs from the GE plant sites had migrated downstream and into the Lower Hudson River as far as the City's harbor. Since then, EPA and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) have continued to collect and evaluate water and fish data throughout the Lower Hudson River. This includes sampling from the state and sampling that is required by EPA's 2006 Consent Decree with GE. EPA is also identifying relevant studies of the Lower Hudson, assessing information provided by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers related to navigational dredging projects, and developing a broad overview of what is currently known about the Lower Hudson. In addition, EPA is determining what information may still be needed to assess the nature and extent of PCB contamination, and taking the first steps to develop preliminary scopes of work for additional studies.

In the spring of 2019, the Agency took two important, distinct steps on the Upper Hudson River PCB cleanup. EPA issued the second five-year review of the in-river cleanup, which includes EPA's decision to defer a determination of the protectiveness of the remedy in the Upper Hudson River until more years of Hudson River fish tissue data are gathered. In a separate action, EPA issued a "Certification of Completion of the Remedial Action" to GE for activities it conducted that were components of the remedy selected for the cleanup of the Upper Hudson River. This is the second certificate in a series of three – the first was issued in 2012 and the third certificate, the "Certification of Completion of the Work," is not expected to be available to GE for more than five decades. During that time extensive monitoring of the sediments, water and fish will continue. The consent decree provides that if, based on the results of such future monitoring, EPA determines that additional actions are necessary to ensure the remedy is protective, EPA can require GE to carry out the work.



Sampling of the Old Champlain Canal floodplain.

Updates to the Superfund National Priorities List

The Superfund National Priorities List (NPL) includes the nation's most serious uncontrolled or abandoned hazardous waste releases. The list serves as EPA's basis for prioritizing Superfund cleanup funding and enforcement actions. Only releases at sites included on the NPL are eligible to receive federal funding for long-term, permanent cleanup. EPA can also delete sites – or portions of sites – from the NPL once all response actions are complete and all cleanup goals have been achieved. (Even though a site is deleted from the NPL, in most cases EPA must continue to carry out five-year reviews to ensure the remedy remains protective.)

Arsenic Mine Superfund Site

In October, EPA announced the addition to the NPL of the Arsenic Mine site, located on a historic arsenopyrite/arsenical sulphate ore mine in Kent, New York. The facility was operated by various companies from the mid-1800s through approximately 1918. As a result, soil and groundwater are contaminated with arsenic that exceeds maximum contaminant levels. The site encompasses impacted areas comprised of 10 residential properties.

EPA's proactive actions at the Arsenic Mine Site address the immediate need to reduce the potential for local residents' short-term exposure to elevated levels of arsenic in the soil. EPA installed barriers to prevent exposure to contaminated soil in high-use areas. EPA has also removed or replaced contaminated soil in gardens and areas used by pets and livestock on affected properties. EPA has already initiated a focused feasibility study to identify options to address residents' exposure in the long-term. EPA is expediting this study and anticipates completion in 2020.



An old mine shaft at the Arsenic Mine site in Kent, NY.

Ellenville Scrap Iron and Metal Superfund Site

After completing all cleanup work, EPA deleted the Ellenville Scrap Iron and Metal Superfund Site from the NPL this fall. The Ellenville Scrap Iron and Metal Superfund Site is a 24-acre inactive scrap iron and metal reclamation facility in Ellenville, New York that began operations in the 1950s and operated into the 1990s. The facility was used as a landfill, as well as a dump for tires and batteries. EPA capped the site to prevent contamination from migrating.

Robintech Inc./National Pipe Co. Superfund Site

In the spring, EPA deleted most of the Robintech Inc./National Pipe Co. site in Vestal, New York from the NPL. The site housed a facility that manufactured polyvinyl chloride pipes, which along with other activities contaminated the soil and groundwater with volatile organic compounds (VOCs), including dichloroethane. After treating more than 10,000 tons of soil and millions of gallons of groundwater, EPA deleted all but 3 acres of the site. EPA is evaluating what will be needed to address this small portion.

Peter Cooper Superfund Site

After completing all work to address contamination at the Peter Cooper Superfund Site in Gowanda, New York, EPA deleted the site from the NPL in September. Peter Cooper Corporation and its predecessor, Eastern Tanners Glue Company, manufactured animal glue in Gowanda from 1904 to 1972. The site of the former Peter Cooper Corporation factory includes an inactive waste disposal area and some areas of contaminated soil. EPA work at the site included excavating contaminated waste and consolidating the waste in one area, covering that area with a protective cap to prevent the waste from spreading, collecting and treating leachate seeps, and installing a gas venting system. EPA helped in the site redevelopment through several enforcement agreements and a \$100,000 Superfund Redevelopment Initiative grant to perform a Reuse Assessment to evaluate redeveloping the site into a community recreation area. By deleting the site, EPA is helping local authorities secure funding for improvements to the recreation area that may not be available for NPL sites.

Promoting Economic Development

To facilitate site redevelopment at the Kinder Morgan facility in Staten Island, NY EPA Region 2 is coordinating with New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) to establish a new state-issued cleanup order which will incorporate state and federal closure and cleanup obligations. The facility's operations as a petroleum bulk storage terminal located along the Arthur Kill date back to 1934 by Mobil Oil Corporation. The facility is regulated by NYSDEC as a Major Oil Storage Facility and became subject to federal hazardous waste management regulation and cleanup in the early 1990s. Staten Island Marine Development purchased the facility from Kinder Morgan in 2019 and proposed to formally close terminal operations, complete the cleanup and prepare the site for use as a 2.5 million square foot industrial warehousing complex. Region 2 collaborated with state partners to coordinate regulatory processes to make redevelopment more efficient and promote economic opportunities at the site. Active remediation is expected to be completed during 2021 and full site redevelopment is targeted for 2023.

Continuing to Protect the Tonawanda Community

EPA continued its work to address serious contamination at the Tonawanda Coke Corporation site in western New York State. The company had operated a coke manufacturing facility since 1978 until it shut down in 2018, and the property had been used for coke manufacturing since 1917. Operations at the site were abandoned in October 2018, leaving behind numerous coal/coke piles, drums and tanks with coal tar sludges, acids, bases, flammable liquids and potentially explosive materials. EPA immediately took action to stabilize the site and throughout 2019 oversaw a phased shutdown of plant operations. This included securing all drums, containers and tanks; treating process waste before being discharged to the local water treatment plant; and systematically de-energizing process lines filled with hazardous substances. EPA actions prevented a large-scale release of hazardous waste and mitigated the potential for fire and explosions which would have been devastating to the surrounding residential community and other industrial facilities nearby, as well as preventing any releases into the Niagara River which borders the site. In October the property was purchased, and the new owners are proposing a long-term cleanup and redevelopment plan under the New York State Brownfields Program.



Tonawanda Coke Corporation facility in Tonawanda, NY.

REVITALIZING LAND AND PREVENTING CONTAMINATION IN NEW JERSEY

Respecting Communities While Cleaning Up Sites

The Quanta Resources Superfund site in Edgewater, New Jersey was the home of a roofing tar plant for more than 100 years. Roofing tar was produced from coal tar, a dark-colored viscous liquid that contains naphthalene and smells like mothballs. To address community concerns about vapor emissions emanating from areas of exposed contaminated soil at the site, Region 2 worked in close collaboration with the company responsible for the cleanup to increase and improve vapor control technologies. This resulted in the company installing tents over the work areas to maximize control of vapor emissions that might reach the surrounding community. These large, specialized tents are fitted with equipment that allows for work to be safely conducted within them and filtration units that remove 95 percent of the site-related airborne contaminants before venting outside of the tents. The community has responded positively to EPA's changes at the site and EPA is continuing to engage the community at each step of the cleanup.



Senior Advisor to the Regional Administrator, Slawomir Kopec, in front of tents at Quanta Resources Superfund site.

In August, Regional Administrator Pete Lopez and New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Catherine McCabe toured six Superfund sites with Congressional Representative Mikie Sherill in New Jersey's 11th District. They included Rolling Knolls, Radiation Technology, Rockaway Township Wells, Rockaway Borough Well Field, Unimatic Manufacturing, and Caldwell Trucking. EPA project managers for each site provided an overview of their projects, discussed upcoming milestones, and answered questions at each stop. Community members and local elected officials participated throughout parts of the tour and were fully engaged in conversations about EPA's clean-up efforts to date. Fostering transparent and trusting working relationships with elected officials and state and local partners is a critical element of our community engagement around contaminated sites. At many Region 2 Superfund sites EPA has also facilitated the creation of Community Advisory Groups that bring together a full range of local stakeholders with whom the agency interacts on an ongoing basis.



Regional Administrator Pete Lopez, Congresswoman Mikie Sherill, and New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Catherine McCabe with EPA staff at the Rolling Knolls Superfund site.



The Cycle Chem facility in Elizabeth, NJ.

Overseeing Cleanups at Active Facilities

In January, EPA Region 2 and Cycle Chem reached a formal legal agreement with EPA to ensure a thorough investigation and cleanup of its Elizabeth, New Jersey hazardous waste management facility. The facility stores, processes, and packages wastes for recycling, and transfer to off-site facilities. There are 14 separate areas of concern where soil and/or groundwater contamination has been identified on and off the site. The contaminants include chlorinated volatile organic compounds including trichloroethylene and perchloroethylene, petroleum hydrocarbons and metals (arsenic and lead). Under the legal agreement, Cycle Chem has investigated contamination at the facility, submitted its report to EPA in April, and is currently performing supplemental site investigation work under EPA oversight. This site is being managed under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) Corrective Action Program. Similar in purpose to the Superfund program, this RCRA program involves hundreds of sites across the region.

Revitalizing Neighborhoods and Creating Economic Opportunities from Brownfields Sites

In July, Region 2 participated in a groundbreaking ceremony hosted by the City of Elizabeth, New Jersey celebrating the future reuse of a cleaned up property in the Frog Hollow neighborhood. The site was formerly used to manufacture iron aggregate and more recently as a commercial trucking and equipment operation. It was assessed using funding awarded to the City through a 2007 EPA Brownfield Assessment Pilot grant. Upon completion of the project, there will be 23 two-family homes plus a 15,000 sq-ft commercial warehouse providing both affordable housing and economic development opportunities for the community.



Region 2 Chief of Staff Chris Lyon and Mayor Bollwage of Elizabeth, NJ celebrating the groundbreaking of brownfields redevelopment.

Superfund Task Force

EPA Assistant Administrator for the Office of Land and Emergency Management Peter Wright and Regional Administrator Pete Lopez announced the completion of the Superfund Task Force and issued the Task Force's final report outlining significant accomplishments over the past two years at Superfund sites across the country. The announcement was celebrated at the American Cyanamid Superfund Site in Bridgewater, New Jersey. American Cyanamid was one of the first Superfund sites



EPA Assistant Administrator for the Office of Land and Emergency Management Peter Wright and Regional Administrator Pete Lopez at the American Cyanamid Superfund Site in Bridgewater, NJ.

listed on the Administrator's Emphasis List in December 2017. It was removed from the Administrator's Emphasis List once it met its significant milestone - the proposal of a cleanup plan, which was finalized in September 2018. In addition, a state-of-the-art groundwater treatment facility began operations at the site this summer. It was built as part of a previous cleanup plan established in 2012 designed to address contaminated groundwater and keep harmful contaminants like benzene from reaching the Raritan River or migrating to other off-site areas.

REVITALIZING LAND AND PREVENTING CONTAMINATION IN THE CARIBBEAN

Supporting the U.S. Virgin Islands' Solid Waste Program

Region 2 has been working closely with the government of the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) to approve its municipal solid waste landfill permit program and to provide technical assistance on solid waste program development. The USVI must get this approval to be able to expand existing landfills, construct new landfills, create programs for the diversion of reusable and recyclable materials, and develop a resilient and sustainable solid waste management program. Working with our federal, territorial, community and education partners, EPA has convened stakeholders, facilitated dialogue, provided technical resources and supplied key information to empower local decision-makers to move ahead with a solid waste management program for the Caribbean. To support these efforts as part of the USVI recovery after the devastation of Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017, \$10 million in supplemental funds are being made available to the territory. Region 2 is working closely with the USVI to develop an acceptable grant work plan to access the funds.



Solid waste landfill in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Helping Clean and Put Contaminated Land to Good Use

The economic crisis that Puerto Rico has experienced for the last decade, along with the impacts of Hurricanes Irma and María, have left the island with many abandoned commercial and industrial properties. In May, Region 2 and the Center for Creative Land Recycling (CCLR) hosted the Fifth Brownfields Redevelopment Week in San Juan, Ponce and Mayaguez, Puerto Rico to help address these vacant and abandoned properties. The free event provided municipalities, non-governmental organizations, and communities information on programs and resources to help support local recovery and redevelopment priorities, from housing to infrastructure development, flood management, and resilience and mitigation planning. During the events, experts in planning, federal funding, redevelopment and investment discussed a variety of themes, including trends in abandoned properties in Puerto Rico, how local governments can be engaged, and lessons learned in brownfield redevelopment.

EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Feeding People, Not Landfills, in the Bronx

In September, EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler and Regional Administrator Pete Lopez toured the Bronx, NY FreshDirect facility, and later participated in a roundtable discussion on reducing food waste with leadership from City Harvest, ReFED and PepsiCo. Following a discussion of how EPA can bolster local efforts to combat food waste, EPA leaders helped serve meals to the hungry at the Woodycrest United Methodist Church in the Bronx with food redirected from Yankee Stadium.

“Addressing the problem of food waste will take cooperation across the public and private sectors, so it was a pleasure to meet with some of the leading organizations and companies committed to eliminating wasted food in New York City and across the country,” said EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler. “The Trump Administration is working closely with our state and local partners to transform wasted food into solutions that feed communities, fuel our economy, and maximize our resources.”



Administrator Andrew Wheeler and Regional Administrator Pete Lopez serving meals to the hungry in the Bronx, NY.

Region 2 Smart Sectors Launch

In September, Region 2 launched its Smart Sectors program, focusing on the Agricultural sector. Farm tours were held in the Cortland, NY area, followed by a Smart Sectors roundtable discussion with farmers, soil and water conservation districts, the New York Farm Bureau and other stakeholders. EPA Region 2’s Smart Sectors program is focused on achieving better environmental outcomes in partnership with key sectors of the economy in New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, as well as with eight tribal Nations in New York State. The agricultural Smart Sectors program seeks to strengthen the bond between EPA and the agricultural sector to enhance environmental stewardship while respecting business practices.



Dredging at the Grasse River Superfund Site in Massena, NY.

Applying Traditional Ecological Knowledge to the Grasse River cleanup in New York

This year, EPA worked collaboratively with the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe on the design of the cleanup of contaminated sediment along the shores of and in the Grasse River, specifically with thoughtful attention to habitat reconstruction and application of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) to the restoration of habitats following cleanup. Incorporating TEK involved close collaboration between EPA and the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe Environment Division on inclusion of tobacco burning ceremonies and seed ceremony songs in the reconstruction process. Seed selection and seed sources and nurseries will also be utilized in the cleanup to preserve the species of plants used for traditional foods, medicines, and cultural ceremonies. This first phase of what is expected to be a three-year cleanup of the Grasse River involved the removal of nearly 95,000 cubic yards of PCB-contaminated sediments from the nearshore areas of the River.



Grasse River Superfund site in Massena, NY.



Regional Senior Leaders gathered with tribal leaders from the eight federally recognized Indian Nations in New York

Strengthening Ties to Indian Nation Partners

In May, Region 2 held its 23rd meeting with leaders of the eight federally recognized Indian Nations within New York State. The annual meeting strengthens partnerships and improves the Nations' environmental programs. All year round, EPA engages and collaborates with Indian Nations to ensure that they have a voice in decisions that affect their land, air and water and that investments are made that strengthen local capacity and self-determination in managing their resources. The Region 2 Indian Nations Work Group has completed nearly 100 action items identified by the Nations on issues including surface water quality, underground storage tank inspections, solid waste management, financial assistance, air monitoring and pesticides.

Helping Understand and Manage Contaminants of Emerging Concern

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) – which include PFOA and PFOS – and 1,4 dioxane are important contaminants in Region 2 and across the country. Region 2 is collaborating with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) to investigate select Superfund sites for the presence of PFAS and 1,4-dioxane compounds in groundwater. To expedite this effort, EPA and NYSDEC have agreed to share responsibilities. EPA has developed a new sampling procedure, provided funding for field equipment, prepared the required technical quality assurance plan, and conducted sampling at EPA-lead Superfund sites. The NYSDEC has arranged the contract for laboratory analytical services for 21 PFAS compounds and 1,4-dioxane, as well as for data validation and data management. Region 2 has already sampled eleven Long Island and four upstate New York EPA-lead Superfund sites and the work continues. EPA also began a similar program with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and Region 2 has sampled groundwater at three Superfund sites for PFAS, 1,4-dioxane and 1,2,3-TCP, with the Region 2 laboratory performing part of those analyses.



Setting up sampling equipment at a Superfund site.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE LAW

Lead-based Paint Compliance and Enforcement

By ensuring that entities such as renovation contractors, landlords, property managers, realtors and others comply with rules that protect the public from exposure to lead from lead-based paint, EPA can address a leading source of lead exposure for children across the nation. Exposure to lead dust, chips or debris from lead-based paint can pose serious risks to human health, particularly for young children. In 2019 Region 2 followed up on nearly 300 complaints, conducted more than 45 onsite lead-based paint inspections and issued over 50 information request letters to evaluate compliance with the Lead-based Paint regulations. We have initiated 10 formal enforcement actions, and sent out over 300 compliance assistance packages to regulated contractors.

Protecting the Air in the New Jersey/New York Metro Area

In October, EPA Region 2 and the U.S. Department of Justice finalized an important legal agreement with Infineum USA LP to address Clean Air Act violations resulting from the company's improper operation of its steam-assisted flare at its chemical manufacturing facility in Linden, New Jersey. EPA determined that Infineum routinely operated the flare with excessive amounts of steam, which diluted the combustible gases in the flare and reduced its combustion efficiency, resulting in significant excess emissions of hazardous air pollutants (HAPs) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs). Under the settlement, Infineum agreed to eliminate excessive steam at the flare by installing monitoring equipment resulting in combustion efficiencies of 98% or greater. Infineum will spend approximately \$3.5 million to make these upgrades to its flare. In addition, Infineum paid a \$187,500 civil penalty for the past violations. By stopping the "over-steaming," the agreement eliminates approximately 147 tons per year of VOC emissions and about 5 tons per year of HAP emissions.

Averting Potential Disaster in Puerto Rico

EPA Region 2 issued an emergency order under the Clean Air Act to Total Petroleum Puerto Rico Corporation to address explosion risks posed by four gasoline storage tanks at the facility in Guaynabo, Puerto Rico. The tanks presented a dangerous fire hazard. Upon learning of the danger at the facility, EPA issued an order requiring the company to immediately stop adding gasoline to these tanks. With close EPA oversight and assistance, the facility took the additional actions necessary to address the explosion hazard and allow the facility to return to normal operations.

Ensuring Proper Cleanup of Sites in New Jersey

In April, EPA Region 2 and U.S. Department of Justice finalized a consent decree that memorializes an agreement with The Sherwin-Williams Company to remove lead and arsenic contaminated soil and sediment at the United States Avenue Burn Superfund site in Gibbsboro, New Jersey, which is one of three sites known collectively as the Sherwin Williams Sites located in Gibbsboro and Voorhees, New Jersey. The United States Avenue Burn site is located near a former paint manufacturing plant and was used as a paint waste dump. Under the consent decree, Sherwin-Williams will spend approximately \$21 million to clean up the site and pay nearly \$1.5 million to partially cover EPA's past unreimbursed response costs. This important agreement builds on years of previous work performed at the site and will result in the removal of approximately 60,000 cubic yards of contaminated soil out of the community. Importantly, the consent decree includes a provision that easily enables its terms to be extended to other areas that make up this group of related sites. EPA is engaging the responsible party constructively to make this community whole and protect people's health.



Surveying proposed sample locations for pre-design investigation for the Sherwin-Williams Superfund site in Gibbsboro, NJ. Results from sampling at these proposed locations will be used to delineate the extent of contamination for remedial action.



Installation of a groundwater monitoring well at the Sherwin-Williams Superfund site. Data from this well will be used to delineate the extent of contamination when designing remedial action.

IMPROVING EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS

Improving our Organizational Structure

In April, our Regional office established a new structure to more closely align with EPA headquarters and other regions. The realignment increases coordination between EPA's national programs and their regional counterparts; improves the consistent implementation of EPA regulations and policies; allows for better resource sharing and allocation; enhances operational excellence; and provides greater transparency for EPA's customers.

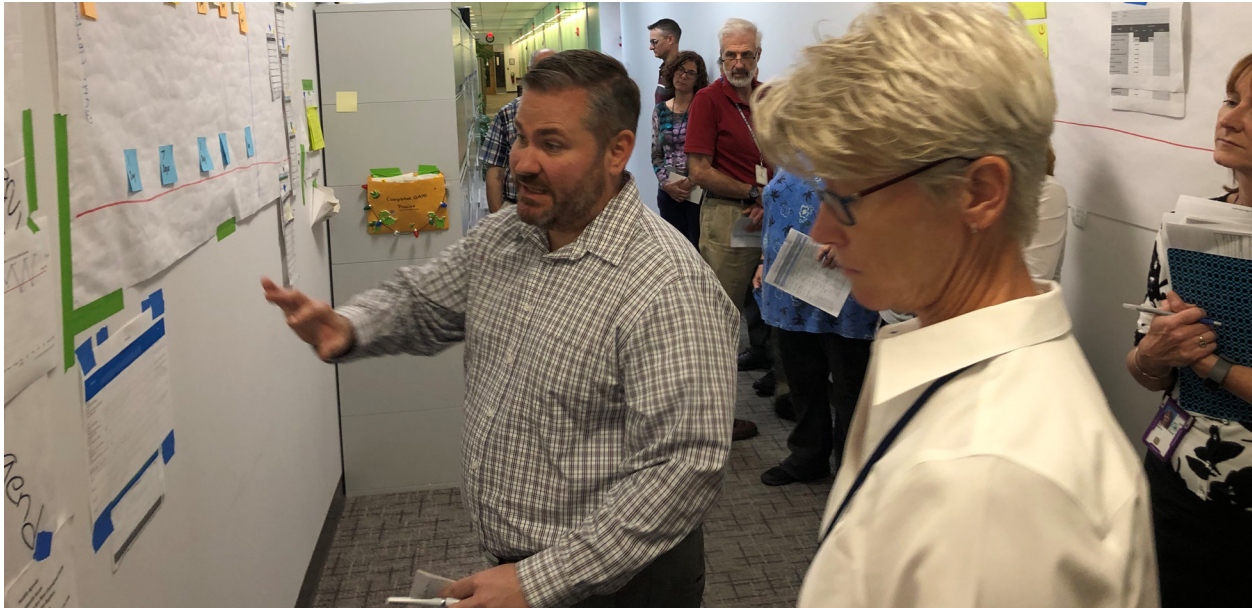
Saving Taxpayer Dollars

Region 2 has nearly completed work to consolidate staff on fewer floors, thus reduce space and rental costs for the New York regional office. Over the last year the Region has reduced EPA occupied space by two floors, or approximately 40,000 square feet. The project has involved the relocation of over 200 people, over 5,000 linear feet of files, and associated equipment. The project is expected to result in annual savings for the Agency of approximately \$4 million in rent.

The Region also relocated approximately 1,250 boxes of files from the New York regional office to EPA-owned space in Edison, NJ. This allowed the Region to better utilize storage space in both the New York and Edison offices, reducing costs to EPA, and helping facilitate the Region's transition to a digital records management system.

More Efficient Use of Vehicles

This year Region 2 developed a detailed, three-year historical analysis of how the Region uses its vehicle fleet. As a result of this study, the Region reduced the fleet by 13 vehicles at an annual cost savings of approximately \$40,000. This resulted in greater efficiency, improved availability of vehicles for staff and reduced costs to the Region, and lowered greenhouse gas emissions reducing the region's carbon footprint.



Chief Operating Officer Henry Darwin discussing an ELMS flow board in the Region 2 laboratory in Edison, NJ.

Environmental Lean Management System – Making Our Processes Better

The Region is making significant progress towards fully deploying EPA’s Lean Management System (ELMS) to all levels of our organization. The system uses tools such as visual management and short, regular staff “huddles” to help examine our many processes to make improvements. Currently, about 170 Region 2 employees are actively engaged in ELMS, focusing on 20 unique processes. We are more than a quarter of the way towards our goal of deploying ELMS to 80% of all staff by the end of September 2020. While ELMS engagement consistently grows, we strive to continuously improve our operations through routine monitoring, measurement, and teamwork to identify and solve problems as they are recognized. ELMS has already improved timeliness of completing various tasks including hazardous waste facility inspection reports, and the process of hiring employees.

As one example, Region deployed ELMS to improve Clean Water Act National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permitting and enforcement activities in the Caribbean. The ELMS process has significantly reduced the permit backlog in Puerto Rico. The permit backlog in Puerto Rico is now below 10%, an all-time low. Additionally, Region 2 created a dashboard that helps identify permittees that will be in significant non-compliance with the Clean Water Act. The timely use of this tool led to a 63% decrease in the share of NPDES permittees in significant noncompliance in the USVI and a 96% reduction in Puerto Rico. A national version of the dashboard is now available to all Regions—and soon all states—which will have a significant impact in improving implementation of the NPDES program and reducing the NPDES significant non-compliance rate nationally.

NATIONAL RECOGNITION

Silver Medal Recipient George Zachos

This summer, the Region celebrated employees with Regional and National Honor Awards recognizing many accomplishments over the past year. George Zachos of Region 2's Superfund and Emergency Management Division was awarded a Silver Medal for Superior Service, EPA's second highest honor award for highly meritorious service to the mission of environmental protection. George was honored for his now 48 years of exemplary public service, including 24 years as the Regional Public Liaison, responding fully, courteously and quickly to thousands of citizen inquiries every year.



George Zachos

Presidential Environmental Youth Award

Salvador Gomez-Colon, a 10th grader from San Juan, Puerto Rico was awarded a 2019 Presidential Environmental Youth Award for creating the Light and Hope for Puerto Rico Initiative in response to the destructive impact of Hurricanes Maria and Irma on Puerto Rico. The project's mission was to purchase and distribute solar lamps and hand-powered washing machines to the most affected communities on the island. Salvador raised over \$160,000 to assist 3,500 families from communities across the island. Under Salvador's initiative, environmentally friendly products were selected for purchase and distribution, which helped reduce water and electricity consumption. The next phase of his initiative is to implement solar energy on fire stations across the island.



Salvador Gomez-Colon

IN MEMORY

This Annual Report is dedicated in memory of our colleagues Keshema Webbe and Marie O'Shea.



Keshema Webbe

Keshema Webbe was posthumously awarded the 2019 Lifetime Achievement Award for her endurance, courage, determination, and contagious positive attitude that helped advance the protection of public health and the environment in her beloved U.S. Virgin Islands. Keshema always went above and beyond the call of duty, despite the circumstances, and left an outstanding legacy for all of us to follow.



Marie O'Shea

As Chairperson of the Region 2 Regional Science Council, Marie O'Shea was a tireless advocate of scientific achievements, especially those in support of moving Region 2's scientific mission forward. She was passionate about recognizing people who made scientific contributions to our regional community, and in 2010 created the Region 2 Regional Science Council Award for Outstanding Scientific/Engineering Support. In 2019, this award was renamed in honor of Marie, and will forever be known as the Marie O'Shea Excellence in Science and Engineering Support Award.



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