



# New York Field Office

<http://nyfo.fws.gov>

## Environmental Contaminants



### Congressional District #23

John McHugh

*“The most alarming of all man’s assaults upon the environment is the contamination of air, earth, rivers, and sea with dangerous and even lethal materials.”*

Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*

Environmental contamination is one of America’s greatest concerns. Annually, approximately 136 million pounds of toxic chemicals are discharged into the Nation’s waterways, while 4 billion pounds of pesticides are applied to the land. Fish and wildlife often signal environmental contamination unnoticed by any other means – fish kills, deformities in birds and fish, and failed reproduction. The New York Field Office’s (NYFO) environmental contaminants program responds to the threats contamination poses to fish and wildlife. NYFO Biologists are responsible for natural resource damage assessment and restoration, hazardous spill response, and technical assistance to State and Federal agencies, National Wildlife Refuges, and citizens with concerns regarding contamination of our fish and wildlife.

### Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration Program (NRDAR)



The Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration (NRDAR) Program is designed to restore natural resources that have been impacted by releases of hazardous substances or oil spills. Several laws provide the foundation for NRDAR, giving natural resource Trustees the legal authority to have those responsible for harm to natural resources pay to restore those resources. Natural resource Trustees include Federal and State agencies and Indian Tribes that have the responsibility and authority to protect natural resources.

To fulfill the mission of restoring natural resources that have been injured by oil spills or hazardous substance releases, the natural resource Trustees conduct a damage assessment to determine the extent of injury to natural resources caused by the hazardous substance release or oil spill. This information is used to determine the amount of restoration that is needed. The Trustees then either reach an agreement with the responsible parties through a negotiated settlement or file suit against the responsible parties for the damage claim. Damage claims are for the cost of restoration, loss of use of the land or natural resources by the general public, and money spent to assess damages. Once the claim is resolved, the Trustees take action to restore the injured resources. Finally, the Trustees monitor the completed restoration projects to ensure success. Natural Resource Damage Assessments have been successfully concluded for the following sites:

Applied Environmental Services (Nassau County)  
Brewster Wellfield (Putnam County)  
Cortese Landfill (Sullivan County)  
Forest Glen Mobile Home Subdivision (Niagara County)  
Hi View Terrace (Erie County)  
Love Canal (Niagara County)  
Mattaice Petrochemical (Nassau County)  
Wide Beach Development (Erie County)  
102<sup>nd</sup> Street Landfill (Niagara County)

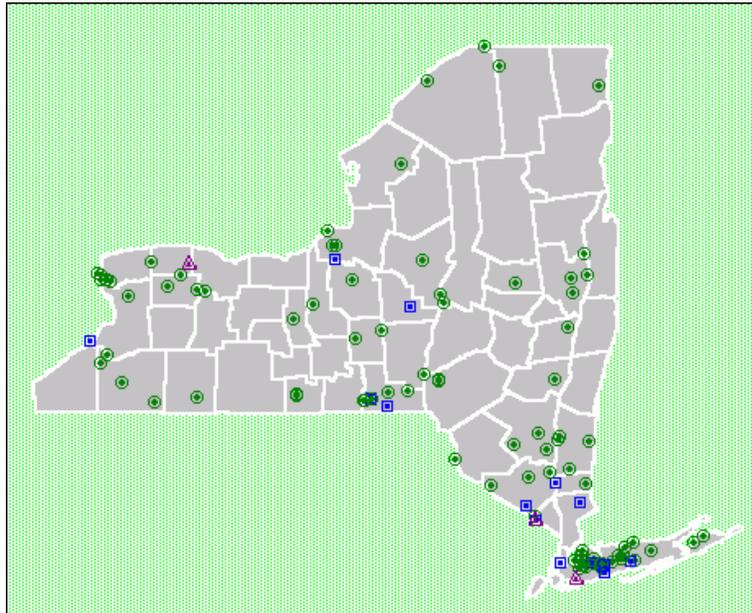


In addition, we are actively conducting natural resource damage assessments related to other hazardous waste sites, including the St. Lawrence Environment Cooperative Assessment and the Hudson River PCB Site Assessment. **The St. Lawrence Environment Natural Resource Damage Assessment** involves the Trustees (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, State of New York, St.

Regis Mohawk Tribe, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) working in cooperation with ALCOA and General Motors to restore natural resources of the St. Lawrence River, Grasse River, Akwesasne, and surrounding area injured as a result of chemical releases from industrial sites.

### **Technical Assistance**

Because NYFO contaminants specialists have unique expertise pertaining to the effects of environmental contaminants on fish and wildlife, they provide technical assistance that is invaluable in resolving complex environmental issues. Technical assistance relating to fish and wildlife affected by contamination at Superfund sites is provided by the NYFO representation on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Biological Technical Assistance Group (BTAG). There are about 100 Superfund Sites in New York State, with seven Sites in the 23rd Congressional District. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has made recommendations to USEPA regarding remediation at sites such as the General Motors Site and the Grasse River (downstream of the ALCOA Site). Our agency, along with the other natural resource Trustees, is encouraging USEPA to reject the untested Grasse River capping proposal in lieu of additional dredging of PCB-contaminated sediments. There are also approximately 45 other contaminated sites in the 23rd Congressional District classified as New York State Inactive Hazardous Waste Sites.



**Federal Superfund Sites**

**Map Key:** ▲ Proposed: 3   ● Final: 90   ■ Deleted: 16

The NYFO also provides environmental contaminants technical assistance to National Wildlife Refuges, State and local governments, and private individuals.

### **Hazardous Spill Response**

Although spills of oil and other hazardous materials occur infrequently in the 23rd Congressional District, personnel at NYFO are trained to assess and minimize harm to fish and wildlife resources. To this end we participated in a multi-agency oil spill drill in neighboring Oneida County in 2003. Spill responses are coordinated with other Federal and State agencies to assist with clean-up, wildlife recovery and rehabilitation, and collection and interpretation of information used in natural resource damage assessments and restorations.

#### **Some Useful Websites:**

<http://nyfo.fws.gov/ec/ecdesc.htm>  
<http://contaminants.fws.gov/>  
<http://restoration.doi.gov/>  
<http://epa.gov/superfund/>  
<http://epa.gov/superfund/programs/nrd>