United States Environmental Protection Agency

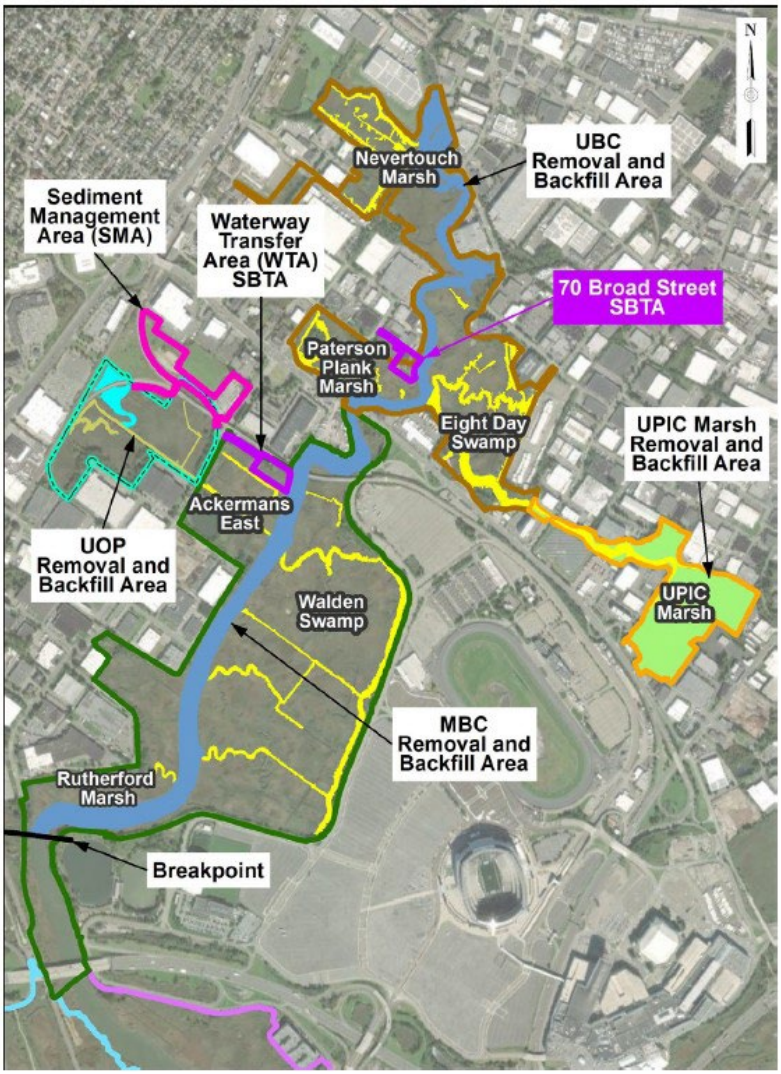
Berry's Creek Study Area
Bergen County, New Jersey

April 2025

Preparing for Cleanup

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is preparing to clean up the Berry's Creek Study Area, or BCSA, which is a part of the Ventron/Velsicol Superfund site in Bergen County, New Jersey. The BCSA Group is a group of approximately 100 parties that are potentially responsible for the contamination at the site and are designing the cleanup plan under EPA oversight. Under the EPA's supervision, the BCSA Group and its contractors are preparing multiple locations to access Berry's Creek and its tributaries since the shallow water and the low bridge at Paterson Plank Road make it difficult to reach all of the cleanup areas using boats launched from a single location. Contractors will use these locations to load and unload equipment and material related to cleanup work. The contractors will also construct a sediment management area where they prepare contaminated sediment for transportation off-site and store clean material which will be used to cover the bottom of the creek.

The contractors began constructing the access points in October 2024. This will take about a year to complete. These locations will be ready to use as soon as the cleanup design is finalized.



The Cleanup Plan and Design

The cleanup plan for the BCSA calls for digging up contaminated sediment and filling the dug-up areas with a clean sand and soil mixture, known as clean fill, which will create a clean surface at the bottom of the creek.

The BCSA Group submitted a draft cleanup design to the EPA in May 2024. The EPA expects to approve a final design for the cleanup this summer.

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Cleanup Work

Cleanup work will start in the fall of 2025 and will take about four years to complete.

The cleanup plan includes:

Upper and Middle Berry's Creek Waterways and Tributaries:

- Digging up and removing up to two feet of sediment from bank-to-bank.
- Filling in the dug-up area with clean fill to help prevent remaining contamination from impacting the creek in the future.
- Replanting and restoring the marsh areas impacted by the cleanup action.

Upper Peach Island Creek Marsh:

- Digging up and removing one foot of sediment from the marsh.
- Digging up and removing two feet of sediment within a 10-foot strip along the waterway banks.
- Filling in the dug-up area with clean fill.
- Placing a thin cover of clean sand and soil in the area surrounding the radio towers.

Dewatering and Off-Site Disposal:

- Preparing the contaminated material for transportation off-site by removing water from the contaminated material, a process known as dewatering.
- Transporting the dewatered material off-site for disposal at an EPA-approved facility.
- Removing water from the contaminated material that will be treated to meet state standards at an on-site water treatment plant and returned to the creek.

Marsh Demonstration Project:

- Studying how different types of treatments placed in specific locations in a marsh will help prevent mercury and other contaminants from getting into the food chain. This project will help the EPA see how the marshes react to the cleanup and inform potential future cleanup options for tidal marshes, which are not being addressed as part of this cleanup work.

Monitoring:

- Collecting and testing of water, sediment, and fish samples, as well as monitoring how much sediment deposits in specific areas, will help determine how effective the cleanup work is. Contractors are currently sampling the creek before the cleanup to compare its condition to when the cleanup is complete.
- The monitoring data will also help the EPA identify potential cleanup options for portions of the site that are not being addressed as part of this current cleanup effort.

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Fish Advisories

The State of New Jersey has established fish advisories which limit or restrict eating fish and crabs in the entire Newark Bay complex, including the Meadowlands. Find current fish advisories here: dep.nj.gov/dsr/fish-advisories-studies/

The state posted and will maintain fish advisory signs throughout the BCSA.

Site Background

The BCSA, which contains Berry's Creek and the surrounding wetlands and waterways, is an approximately 4.5-mile tributary of the Hackensack River. The BCSA begins near the Teterboro Airport and travels through the boroughs of Carlstadt, East Rutherford, Lyndhurst, Moonachie, Rutherford, Teterboro, and Wood-Ridge before emptying into the Hackensack River.

From 1927 to 1974, various parties operated a mercury processing plant at the Ventron/Velsicol site. These operations released waste from the plant into Berry's Creek and the surrounding area. In addition, other facilities nearby released additional waste into the creek and surrounding area. These facilities include two EPA Superfund sites, the Scientific Chemical Processing site and Universal Oil Products Superfund site, or UOP, as well as several other hazardous waste sites managed by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, or NJDEP.

In the 1970s, the NJDEP began investigating contamination in the area. The EPA began investigating the site in the late 1980s and found that in addition to the mercury and methylmercury contamination, the site was also contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, and chromium.

In 1990, the EPA took immediate action to protect people's health and the environment by cleaning up contaminated soil at residential and public properties.

In 2006, the EPA and NJDEP finalized a cleanup plan to address the former processing plant which is one of the sources of the contamination. This portion of the cleanup included digging up and removing contaminated soil, placing a cap on soil that contained mercury contamination, building a barrier system to help prevent the contamination from further impacting the area, and creating a buffer between the capped areas and Berry's Creek. Under the supervision of the EPA and NJDEP, the potentially responsible parties completed this cleanup work in 2010. The state also put in place groundwater and land-use restrictions.

The EPA is now addressing the cleanup of Berry's Creek and the surrounding area which together makes up the BCSA. The cleanup of the BCSA includes the waterways of the nearby UOP site because the waterways of UOP overlap with the BCSA. The EPA chose the cleanup plan for the BCSA in 2018 and for the waterways of UOP in 2019. The responsible parties are preparing one detailed engineering design for the cleanup of both the BCSA and the waterways of the UOP site.

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The sediment management area for the BCSA cleanup is located on the UOP site. The EPA will use this sediment management area to prepare contaminated sediment for transportation off-site and to store clean material that will later be used to cover the bottom of the creek.

Contaminants

Mercury is a naturally occurring element that is used in the manufacturing of electronics, fluorescent lighting, and other products. **Methylmercury** is formed when mercury interacts with bacteria. It is often found in plants and fish in water contaminated with mercury. Learn more about mercury and methylmercury and their potential human health impacts here: https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/tfacts46.pdf

PCBs are a mixture of chemicals that were used as coolants and lubricants. The U.S. banned the manufacturing of PCBs in 1977 because of evidence that they build up in the environment and can cause harmful human health and environmental impacts. Learn more about PCBs and potential human health impacts here: https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/tfacts17.pdf

Chromium is a naturally occurring element that is used for steel manufacturing and other industrial processes. Chromium is an essential nutrient for the human body, however exposure to high levels of chromium can cause human health impacts such as cancer. Learn more about chromium and potential human health impacts here: https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/tfacts7.pdf

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