

**NATIONAL PRIORITIES LIST (NPL)**

\*\*\*Final Site\*\*\*

September 2010

**NEWTOWN CREEK** | **Brooklyn/Queens, New York**  
*Kings/Queens Counties* **Site Location:**

The site is located between the border of Queens and Brooklyn in New York City and is approximately 3.8 miles long.

 **Site History:**

By the 1850s, the area surrounding Newtown Creek had become one of the largest industrial centers in New York City. By 1870, more than 50 refineries were located along the banks of Newtown Creek. At the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the creek was lined with oil refineries and petrochemical plants, fertilizer and glue factories, copper-smelting and fat-rendering plants, shipbuilders, sugar refineries, hide tanning plants, canneries, sawmills, paint works, and lumber and coal yards. In the early 1900s, Newtown Creek was one of the key industrial arteries in New York City, with more than 500 enterprises lining the Creek at its peak. During World War II, Newtown Creek was the busiest industrial port in the Northeast, with tanker traffic lining its length. As a result of its industrial past, including countless spills, Newtown Creek is highly polluted.

 **Site Contamination/Contaminants:**

The Newtown Creek site consists of contaminated sediments for which there are numerous possible sources. Sampling events have shown the sediments in the Creek to be contaminated with a variety of pollutants, including the metals antimony, arsenic, cadmium, chromium, copper, lead, nickel, selenium, silver, and zinc; polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) and phthalates; polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB); and volatile organic contaminants (VOC). Results indicate that copper and total petroleum hydrocarbons (TPH) are present at high levels in the Creek sediments. The extent of contamination traverses almost the entire length of the Creek.

 **Potential Impacts on Surrounding Community/Environment:**

Newtown Creek is part of the New York-New Jersey Harbor Estuary, which has been designated by EPA as an Estuary of National Significance. Despite the ongoing pollution problems, some residents currently use the Creek for recreational purposes such as kayaking, while others catch fish for consumption out of the Creek.

 **Response Activities (to date):**

EPA has performed extensive sampling of the creek.

 **Need for NPL Listing:**

The State of New York referred the site to EPA due to the complex nature of the contamination along the Creek. Other cleanup programs were evaluated, but are not viable at this time. EPA received a letter of support for placing this site on the NPL from the State.

*[The description of the site (release) is based on information available at the time the site was evaluated with the HRS. The description may change as additional information is gathered on the sources and extent of contamination.]*

For more information about the hazardous substances identified in this narrative summary, including general information regarding the effects of exposure to these substances on human health, please see the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) ToxFAQs. ATSDR ToxFAQs can be found on the Internet at <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaq.html> or by telephone at 1-888-42-ATSDR or 1-888-422-8737.