



Newtown Creek Public Health Assessment Community Fact Sheet - March 2012



Newtown Creek NPL site is a 3.8-mile waterway between Brooklyn and Queens in New York City

The New York State Department of Health (NYS DOH), in partnership with the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), has prepared a draft Public Health Assessment (PHA) report for the Newtown Creek National Priority List (NPL) site. This community fact sheet provides a brief summary of conclusions from that document. Copies of the full PHA report, which includes background information and a public comment form, are available online or by calling the NYS DOH (see *Contact Information* on back page).

The NYS DOH and ATSDR complete a PHA for every site in New York that is proposed to the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) NPL, also known as the federal Superfund list. In a PHA, the health agencies review information about hazardous substances at a site and evaluate whether exposure to those substances might cause harm to human health.

For the Newtown Creek PHA, the NYS DOH and ATSDR evaluated existing environmental data for chemicals in bottom sediments and biological contaminants in surface water. Based on this information and reports that people use Newtown Creek for boating, scuba diving and fishing, the NYS DOH and ATSDR have the following health advice:

- ◆ Eating fish and crabs taken from Newtown Creek could harm people's health due to chemical contaminants. Women under 50 years old and children under 15 years old should not eat any fish or crabs from these waters. Others should follow the NYS DOH health advisories for eating fish and crabs taken from this and other waterways (see *NYS DOH Fish Advisory Information* on back page)
- ◆ Swimming, scuba diving and wind surfing (with full body immersion) could harm people's health due to biological contaminants and physical hazards (underwater debris, commercial boat traffic)
- ◆ Canoeing, kayaking, boat touring and catch-and-release fishing are not expected to harm people's health if people use precautions (properly wash their hands) to avoid swallowing biological contaminants from surface water

Next Steps

The EPA is collecting a variety of environmental samples to better understand the nature and extent of contamination in and around the Newtown Creek NPL site. NYS DOH and ATSDR will examine this new information as it becomes available to determine if additional health advice is needed.

As a next step, NYS DOH and ATSDR are asking for input and comments from the public on the draft Newtown Creek PHA. Written comments should be sent to the NYS DOH by May 4, 2012 to be included with responses in the final Newtown Creek PHA report.

Contact Information

For copies of the full Newtown Creek PHA report (with public comment form):

Call NYS DOH at 518.402.7860 (toll free 1-800.458.1158) or visit the NYS DOH website at <http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/investigations/newtown/>

For questions about the Newtown Creek PHA:

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NYS DOH Fish Advisory Information

For copies of the NYS DOH publication *New York City Area: Health Advice on Eating Fish You Catch*, call the NYS DOH at 518.402.7530 (toll free 1-800.458.1158) or visit the NYS DOH website at http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/outdoors/fish/health_advisories/index.htm

The New York City Area fish advisory brochure is available in three languages (English, Spanish and Chinese) and includes a map showing Newtown Creek.

