



# EPA Starting Field Work at the Gowanus Canal

Community Update

December 2009

**Need more information? Here are three ways to get what you need:**

**Call or e-mail:**

EPA personnel will be happy to answer your questions or add you to our Gowanus Canal mailing list. You can call or e-mail:

Natalie Loney  
Community Involvement Coordinator  
212 637-3639 or 800 346-5009  
[loney.natalie@epa.gov](mailto:loney.natalie@epa.gov)

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Remedial Project Manager  
212 637-4257  
[tsiamis.christos@epa.gov](mailto:tsiamis.christos@epa.gov)

**Read:**

You can review documents and reports on the Gowanus Canal at EPA's Records Center located at:

**EPA Region 2  
Superfund Records Center  
290 Broadway, 18th Floor  
New York, NY 10007-1866**

**Surf the net:**

EPA has information on the superfund process, the Gowanus Canal site and other hazardous waste sites in our region on our Web site. You can also join our Gowanus mailing list to receive updates on EPA's activities at:

[www.epa.gov/region02/superfund/npl/gowanus/](http://www.epa.gov/region02/superfund/npl/gowanus/)

## FIRST PHASE OF GOWANUS FIELD WORK TO BEGIN

Supplemental field work to determine the full extent of the contamination in the Gowanus Canal and to calculate the human and ecological risks associated with that contamination is scheduled to begin in early December 2009. This work will supplement previous studies that have been carried out by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and National Grid, a **potentially responsible party**. Field activities will include conducting a bathymetric (underwater depth) study and collecting sediment, surface water, air, and ground water samples. Sampling of the Canal will continue periodically until late summer 2010. It is anticipated that a **remedial investigation (RI)** report and human health and ecological **risk assessments** will be completed by late 2010.

Subsequently, a **feasibility study (FS)** will be prepared. The FS will identify and evaluate cleanup alternatives to address contamination at the site. The FS is expected to be completed in late 2011. It is anticipated that EPA will select a remedy to address the contamination in the Canal in 2012.

## NPL LISTING OF THE GOWANUS

The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed the Gowanus Canal for inclusion to the National Priorities List (NPL) in April 2009. The comment period for the listing closed in June 2009, over 800 comments were received. A **responsiveness summary**, a summary of the comments that were received and EPA's response to these comments, is in preparation. The final decision regarding placing the Gowanus Canal on the NPL will be made by EPA's headquarters in Washington, DC.

### **PUBLIC INFORMATION SESSION**

EPA is hosting a public information meeting to discuss the next steps at the Gowanus site. The meeting will take place from

**7:00 - 9:00 PM**

on

**Thursday, December 3, 2009**

in the auditorium of

**P.S. 32**

located at

**317 Hoyt Street, Brooklyn, NY**

## **Glossary:**

**Remedial Investigation:** An in-depth study designed to gather data needed to determine the nature and extent of contamination at a Superfund site.

**Feasibility Study:** Analysis of the practicability of a proposal; e.g., a description and analysis of potential cleanup alternatives for a site such as one on the National Priorities List. The feasibility study usually recommends selection of a cost-effective alternative. It usually starts as soon as the remedial investigation is underway.

**Risk Assessment:** Using site-related data, the increased human health risks and ecological impacts posed by the contamination in the absence of cleanup measures are determined.

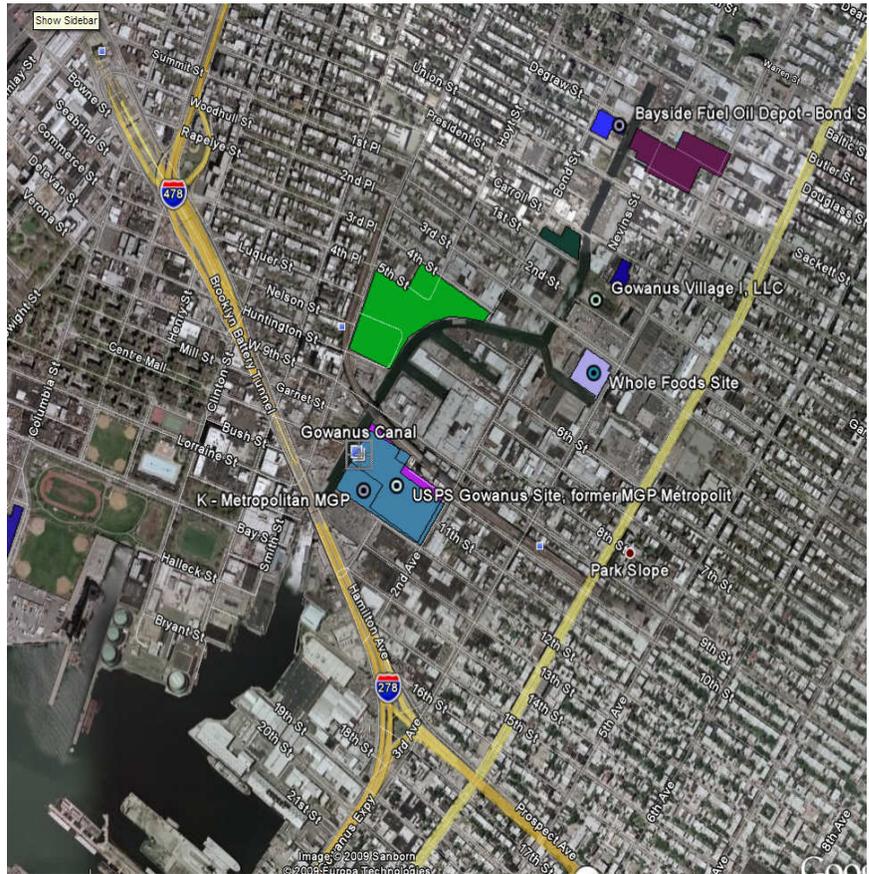
**Responsiveness Summary:** A summary of oral and/or written public comments received by EPA during a comment period on key EPA documents, and EPA's response to those comments.

**Potentially Responsible Party:** Any individual or company--including owners, operators, transporters or generators--potentially responsible for, or contributing to a spill or other contamination at a Superfund site.

**Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs)** – Polychlorinated biphenyls are mixtures of up to 209 individual chlorinated compounds. PCBs have been used as coolants and lubricants in transformers, capacitors, and other electrical equipment because they don't burn easily and are good insulators

**Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)**- Volatile organic compounds are compounds that evaporate easily into the air. Many VOCs are human-made chemicals that are used and produced in the manufacture of paints, pharmaceuticals, and refrigerants. VOCs typically are industrial solvents.

**Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs)** - Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) are a group of over 100 different chemicals that are formed during the incomplete burning of coal, oil and gas, garbage, or other organic substances. Some PAHs are manufactured and can be found in coal tar, crude oil, creosote, and roofing tar.



## **CONTAMINATION IN THE GOWANUS**

The Gowanus Canal is bounded by several Brooklyn communities including Gowanus, Park Slope, Cobble Hill, Carroll Gardens and Red Hook. The Canal empties into New York Harbor. Completed in 1869, the Gowanus Canal was once a major transportation route for the then separate cities of Brooklyn and New York. Manufactured gas plants, mills, tanneries, and chemical plants are among the many facilities that operated along the canal.

As a result of years of industrial discharges, storm water runoff, and sewer outflows, the Gowanus Canal has become one of the nation's most extensively contaminated water bodies. Contaminants impacting the canal include **polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs)**, **polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs)**, heavy metals, and **volatile organic compounds (VOCs)**. The contaminated canal poses a potential threat to the nearby residents who use the canal for fishing and recreation.