

FACT SHEET

HUDSON RIVER

MINK INJURY DETERMINATION



The Hudson River Natural Resource Trustees – the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration \(NOAA\)](#), the [U.S. Department of the Interior \(DOI\)](#), and [New York State](#) (the Trustees) – are conducting a Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) to determine how polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) released from the General Electric Company (GE) plants at Fort Edward and Hudson Falls, New York harm the natural resources of the Hudson River and the surrounding ecosystem.

GE's Release of PCBs Injured Mink Foraging within the Upper Hudson River

The Trustees investigated the effects of PCB contamination on American mink, an ecologically important predatory mammal, in the Upper Hudson River and its floodplain (UHR). Through this work, the Trustees documented multiple lines of evidence of injury to mink from PCB exposure. Their findings are released in a report titled, *Injury Determination for American Mink (Neovison vison) Foraging within the Upper Hudson River Basin, New York*.

What are the Lines of Evidence that Support Injury to UHR Mink?

UHR Mink are Exposed to PCB Contaminated Prey

Mink are primarily exposed to PCBs through their diet. Common mink prey items collected from the UHR (e.g., fish, amphibians, crayfish, small mammals) were contaminated with PCBs at levels harmful to mink. Higher PCB concentrations were measured in mink collected from the Hudson River compared to mink captured further away.

PCB Concentrations in UHR Mink are Sufficient to Cause Injury

Health impacts to mink (death, reproductive impairment, and disease/physical deformities), have been well documented in field and laboratory studies, including those conducted for the Hudson River NRDA. Captive mink fed a diet mixed with UHR fish at PCB concentrations commonly encountered in the UHR exhibited many of these adverse effects, including most notably increased kit mortality. PCB concentrations in individual wild mink from the UHR were also correlated with reduced body weight and depleted body fat stores, which are both indicators of poor health.

PCB Contamination Adversely Affects the UHR Mink Population

Population density and abundance are direct measures of survival and reproductive success. In two consecutive years of study, mink density along the UHR was 40 % lower than along the nearby Mohawk River. Trapping data and scent station visitations also demonstrated decreased mink abundance closer to the UHR.

What Happens Next?

The lines of evidence briefly presented above demonstrate that American mink foraging within the UHR have been harmed by GE's release of PCBs. This is a natural resource injury under federal law and regulation. The extent of the injury is provided in greater detail in the Mink Injury Determination Report. The Trustees may seek to address this



injury to mink through the Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration process by, for example, protecting land along rivers and streams or improving mink's access to habitat with clean food and water.

Hudson River Natural Resource Damage Assessment Documents Website:

<https://www.diver.orr.noaa.gov/web/guest/diver-admin-record/6306>

Contact Us:

Sean Madden, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Sean.Madden@dec.ny.gov; 518-402-8977

<https://dec.ny.gov/nature/waterbodies/lakes-rivers/hudson-river/natural-resource-damage-assessment>

Margaret Byrne, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Margaret_Byrne@fws.gov; 413-406-6369

<https://fws.gov/project/hudson-river-natural-resource-damage-assessment>

John Catena, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

John.Catena@noaa.gov; 978-317-9566

<https://darrp.noaa.gov/hazardous-waste/hudson-river>



**Department of
Environmental
Conservation**