Fields Brook NRDAR Narrative

As part of the larger Lake Erie and Great Lakes eco-region, the Fields Brook Site, including the Ashtabula River, forms a unique and important ecosystem. The terrestrial, wetland, and aquatic habitats of Fields Brook support a wide diversity of birds, fish, and mammals, including many rare, threatened, and endangered species. The Site, located approximately 55 miles east of Cleveland in the city and county of Ashtabula, where the Brook empties into the Ashtabula River, approximately 8,000 feet upstream from Lake Erie. From the 1940’s to the early 1980’s, up to nineteen separate industrial facilities operated on the Site. Manufacturing activities and waste management practices, ranging from metal fabrication to chemical production resulted in the release of a variety of hazardous substances to Fields Brook and its watershed over a period of decades,including to the floodplain and wetlands areas. The Environmental Protection Agency designated Fields Brook a Superfund Site, adding it to the National Priorities List (NPL) on September 8, 1983.The Ashtabula River was also identified as an area of concern in the Fields Brook Record(s) of Decision.

Sediments at the Site were contaminated with PCBs, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), heavy metals, phthalates and low-level radionuclides. VOCs and heavy metals including mercury, lead, zinc, and cadmium were detected in surface water from Fields Brook and the Detrex tributary. Contaminants detected in fish included VOCs and PCBs and an estimated 944 acres of the floodplain/wetland area were contaminated by hazardous substances. Public uses and enjoyment of these resources, including fishing, were also impaired due to the contamination of habitat and trust resources of the Fields Brook area.

Toxic contaminants have wide ranging effects on aquatic and terrestrial life. Thus, in 1998, the Trustees initiated a Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) to assess impacts to natural resources from the hazardous substance releases. The Trustees included the U.S. Department of the Interior, represented by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service; the U.S. Department of Commerce, represented by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; the State of Ohio, represented by the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency. In 1999, the United States and the State of Ohio entered into a negotiated settlement with the potentially responsible parties in the amount of $850,000.00 for natural resource damages to the Fields Brook Site. Settling potentially responsible parties included: Archer Daniels Midland Company; ASHTA Chemicals Inc.; Bee Jay Construction Co., Inc. [formerly known as (f/k/a) Brenkus Excavating, Inc.]; C. H. Heist Corp.; Cabot Corporation; Consolidated Rail Corporation; Detrex Corporation; Elkem Metals Company L.P.; First Energy Corporation.; GenCorp Inc.; Greenleaf Motor Express Inc.; Koski Construction Company, Inc.; Luntz Services Corporation; Mallinckrodt Inc. (f/k/a International Minerals and Chemicals Corp.); Millennium Inorganic Chemicals Inc. (f/k/a SCM Corporation and SCM Chemicals, Inc.); Millennium Petrochemicals Inc.; Motta’s Body & Frame Shop, Inc.; Occidental Chemical Corporation; Ohio Power Company; Olin Corporation; Plasticolors, Inc.; Reserve Environmental Services, Inc.; RMI Titanium Company; The Sherwin-Williams Company; Union Carbide Corporation; Viacom International Inc. (f/k/a Paramount Communications, Inc.); the United States General Services Administration (as successor to the Defense Plant Corporation) and the United States Department of Energy.

Following settlement, a restoration plan was drafted, noticed for public comment, and finalized in 2006. Fields Brook restoration funds were combined with the Ashtabula River and Harbor NRDA settlement and a combined Trustee Council was established. Restoration activities are documented in the Ashtabula River NRDA restoration projects on this website.