

NOAA Hazardous Waste Site Report

Perth Amboy's PCBs (II-57)
Perth Amboy, New Jersey
April 13, 1984

Location and Nature of the Site:

In July 1980, a sanitary sewer backup and overflow incident occurred which caused the release of PCB-contaminated sewage (PCB source not identified in site files) over several acres of a residential area in Perth Amboy and at the Witco Chemical Company facility. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) reports do not provide data on specific levels of this PCB contamination except to state that they are "significant". Basements of residences in the affected area were flooded with this PCB contaminated sludge. Blockage caused the sewage to be discharged into Crane's Creek, a tributary of the Arthur Kill Waterway, through a bypass line. Approximately six miles of sewer line are contaminated with PCB's. Sludge tested at the city sewage treatment plant has also shown that significant levels of PCB's remain in the plant.

Proximity of Chemical Hazard to Marine Resources:

PCB-contaminated raw sewage is being discharged continuously into Crane's Creek, Spa Spring Creek, and the Arthur Kill from the initial loading of PCB's at the treatment plant. Several residential areas might require removal of PCB-contaminated cover sediment.

Marine Resources at Risk:

The southern shore of Raritan Bay and Sandy Hook Bay are important commercial and recreation harvesting areas for shellfish and finfish (Table 1). The Raritan River is a spawning area for alewife and blueback herring and at one time was also a striped bass and American shad spawning area (6). The Raritan Bay area is a nursery area for many fish and shellfish.

Tidal wetlands are present throughout the lower parts of Raritan River and in some areas of the southern shore of Raritan Bay. Great blue heron and osprey nest at Gateway National Recreation Area.

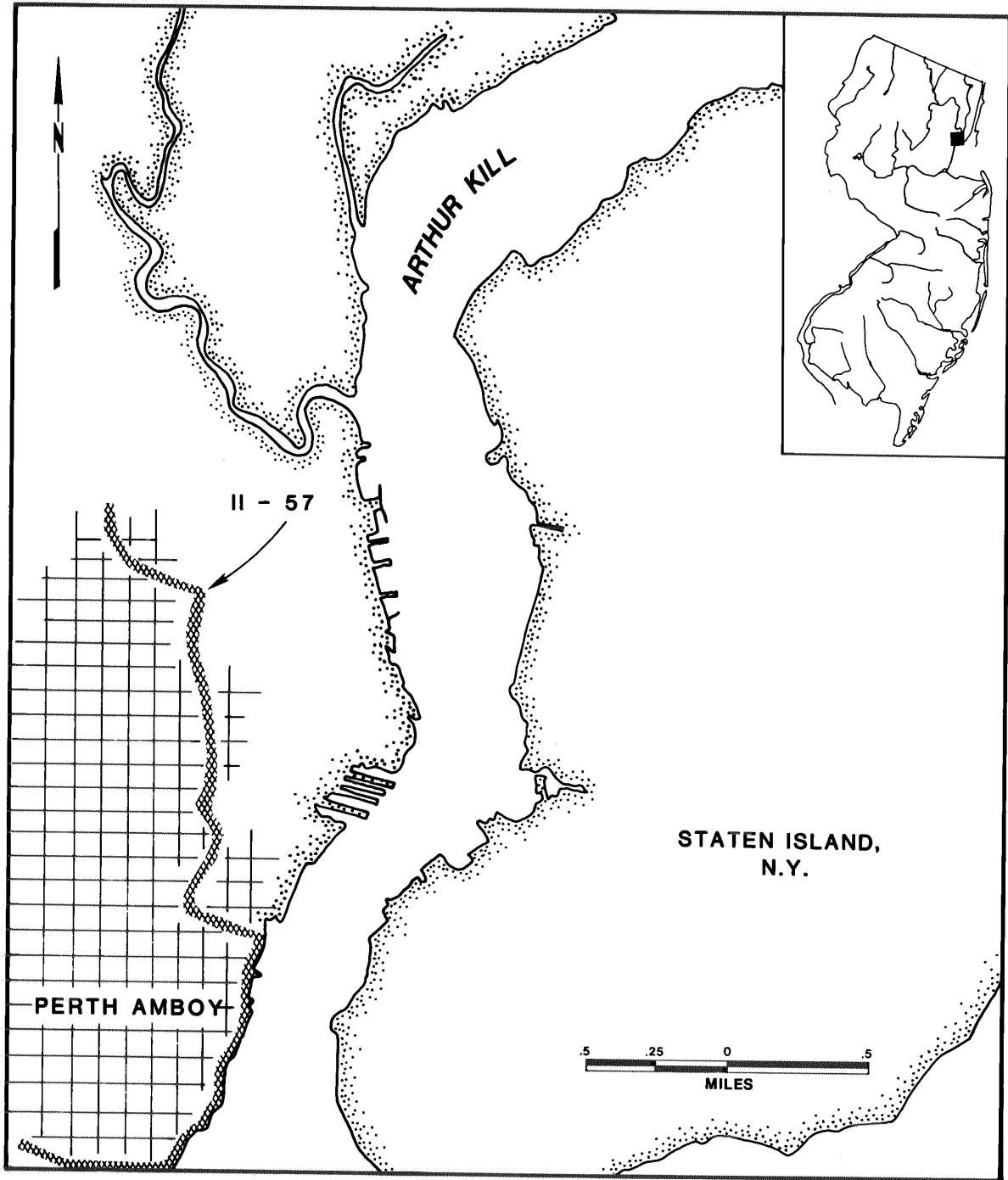


FIGURE 1. Site location.

Table 1. Fishery Resources of Tidal Regions of the Raritan River (1,2,3,4,5)

Finfish Species	Adult Habitat	Spawning Area	Nursery Area	Commer. Fish	Rec. Fish	Migr. Route
<u>Anadromous</u>						
Alewife		x	x	x	x	
Blueback herring		x	x	x	x	x
American shad						x
Striped bass			x	x		
<u>Non-anadromous</u>						
White perch		x	x	x	x	x
Weakfish					x	
Bluefish					x	
Bay Anchovy	x	x				
<u>Shellfish</u>						
Eastern oyster	x	x	x	x	x	
Hard clam	x	x	x	x	x	
Blue crab	x	x	x	x	x	

Summary of Site-Related Actions:

New Jersey DEP has removed highly contaminated sediment from residential areas near the overflow discharge. The State of New Jersey has also filed suit against Witco Chemical Company for cleanup and removal of PCB contamination at its site, in the sewer system, in Spa Spring Creek, Crane's Creek, and Perth Amboy's sewage treatment plant.

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References:

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2. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Atlantic Coast Ecological Inventory, 1980.
3. Berg, D.L., and J. S. Levinton, 1984, The Biology of the Hudson-Raritan Estuary, with Emphasis on Fishes, Department of Ecological Evolution, SUNY.

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4. Breder, C.M., and D. E. Rosen, 1966, Modes of Reproduction in Fishes, TFH Publications.
5. Environmental Sensitivity Index - New Jersey, RPI (unpublished)
6. Zich, H.E., 1977, The Collection of Existing Information and Field Investigation of Anadromous Clupeid Spawning in New Jersey. New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Miscellaneous Reproductions Number 41.
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