

NOAA Hazardous Waste Site Report

Universal Oil Products, Inc. (II-8)
Bergen County, New Jersey
April 13, 1984

Location and Nature of Site:

Universal Oil Products Corporation, Chemical Division, operated this site located on State Highway 17 in East Rutherford from the early 1950's to 1980 (Figure 1). The facility was closed and razed by the company in 1980. Tall marsh grasses, small trees, and no buildings were observed in April 1984. Random refuse dumping was observed on the site.

Universal Oil Products operated this site for the purpose of manufacturing industrial organic chemicals. Two waste lagoons were located on the eastern part of the property. All the residues from its manufacturing operation, plus waste solvents and solid waste, were dumped into these lagoons for two decades. The company was reported to have had very sloppy housekeeping when it was in operation. Liquid chemical waste spillages, with pH values ranging from one to three, were noted when the facility was in operation.

Hazardous waste manifests compiled in 1979 noted that ether, alcohol, ketone, glycol residues, mixed solvents, and other wastes totaling over 4.5 million gallons were dumped into the lagoons over a 20-year period.

Proximity of Chemical Hazard to Marine Resources:

Leachate from the two on-site lagoons enter into Ackerman Creek which flows through the property. The flow of Ackerman Creek is into Berry's Creek, a tributary of the Hackensack River. Total stream mile distance from Universal Oil Products to the Hackensack River is approximately three miles. The entire 85-acre site is in the Hackensack coastal wetlands. The site's history of spills and the use of lagoons to accept chemical wastes suggests that contamination of these wetlands is ongoing.

Marine Resources at Risk:

The Hackensack River supports small runs of several anadromous fish species, but is not a primary spawning or nursery area (Table 1).

The Newark Bay area is very heavily developed and does not serve as a primary spawning or nursery habitat for anadromous fish. Adult fish may enter this area during spawning runs in the Hackensack River, and some species are present year-round as adults or larvae (2).

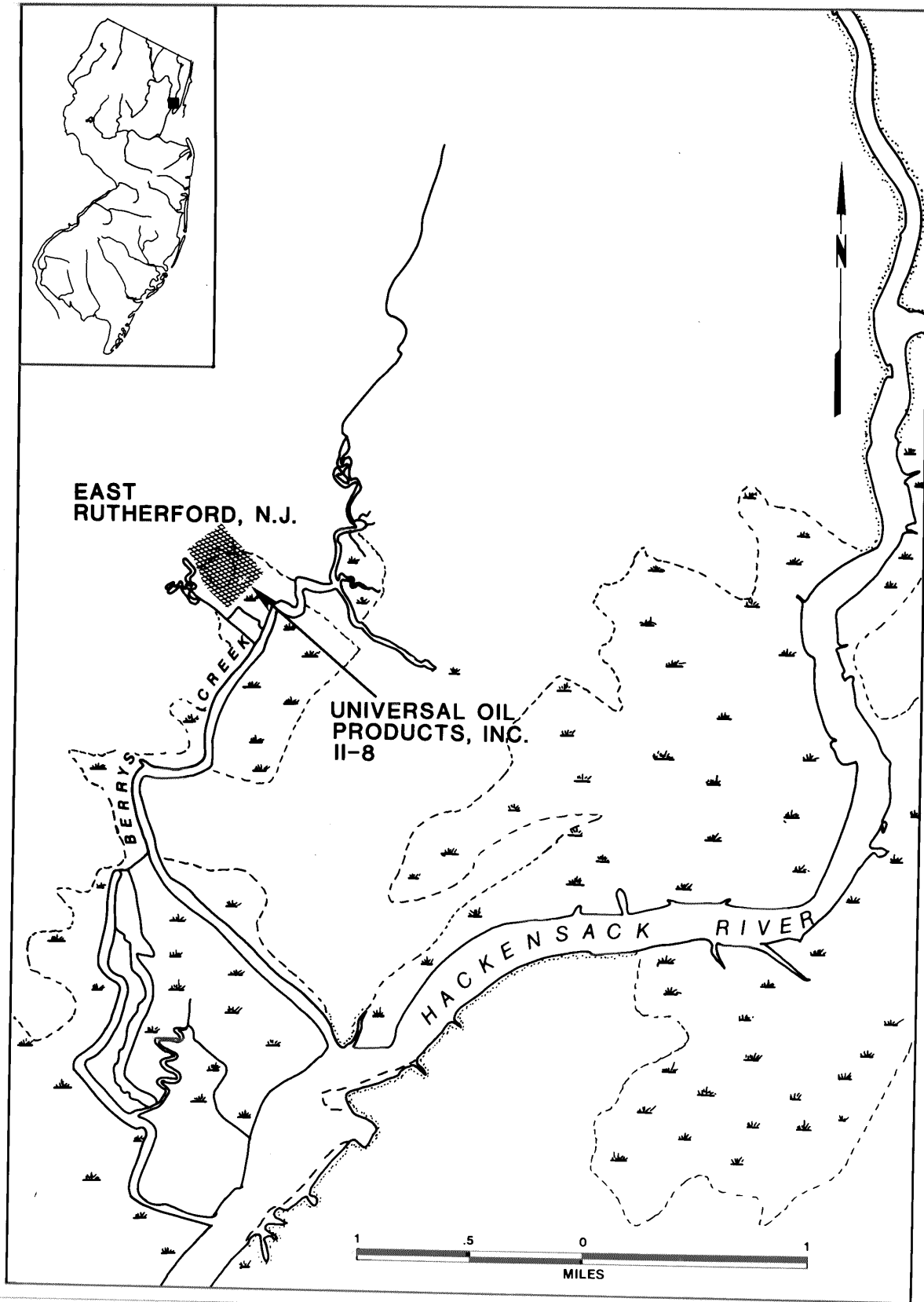


FIGURE 1. Site location.

Table 1. Fishery Resources of the Hackensack River and Newark Bay (1-4)

Finfish Species	Adult Habitat	Spawning Area	Nursery Area	Comm. Fish.	Rec. Fish.	Migr. Route
<u>Anadromous</u>						
Alewife						x
Blueback herring						x
Tomcod			x			x
Striped bass			x			x
<u>Non-anadromous</u>						
White perch	x					
Flounder	x					
Bluefish	x		x			
Spot	x		x			
Northern kingfish	x					
<u>Shellfish</u>						
Blue crab	x		x		x	

There has been a long history of declining anadromous fish runs in New Jersey, dating back to the late 1800's. The Hackensack River has confirmed runs of herring, but shad spawning does not occur there now (6).

There is an area in the southwest corner of Newark Bay that is used as an overwintering area for waterfowl and shorebirds, and there is a rookery for wading birds located on Shooters Island (2).

Summary of Site-Related Actions:

In March 1981, a consultant was employed by Universal Oil Products to conduct a hydrogeologic investigation to assess the impact of the contamination and to locate the source(s) and extent of contamination.

In August 1982, an administrative order was sent by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection demanding a more extensive ground- and surface water monitoring program, and additional details on the locations and contents of old landfills, lagoons, and storage tanks on the site. Universal Oil Products requested an administrative hearing on the order. A consent order was signed in July 1983 and the company has assumed responsibility for conducting a feasibility study related to remedial action.

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References:

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2. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1982. Assessment of Resources of Newark Bay.
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4. Breder, C.M. and D.E. Rosen, 1966. Modes of Reproduction in Fishes. TFH Publications.
5. Research Planning Institute. Environmental Sensitivity Index - New Jersey. Unpublished.
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