



# CLEARING THE WAY FOR WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

*By Dr. JoAnne Castagna*

**R**ecently, on a cool, breezy morning on the Glen Cove waterfront in New York, the city’s mayor stated to the public and media that as she stood before them, the last truckload of radioactive waste was being hauled from that property, clearing the way for a new waterfront development. Standing beside her were members of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); United States Army Corps of Engineers®, New York District; and state and local agencies that played major roles in making this milestone a reality for the small community.

## Li Tungsten Superfund Site

**T**he Li Tungsten Superfund Site is comprised of the former Li Tungsten facility; the Captain’s Cove property, which was used as a disposal site for some of the facility’s waste; and the Glen Cove Creek, which was contaminated with slag from the facility operations. For decades, the 1-mile industrialized portion of the Glen Cove waterfront was occupied by various industries, and a portion was used as a dumping ground. All of this occurred before the establishment of the strict environmental laws we have today.

Wah Chang Corporation and Wah Chang Smelting and Refining Company were two of these companies. Ironically, Wah Chang means “great development” (in part) in Chinese, and these companies—along with others such as the Li Tungsten Corporation—ran facilities on different portions of the site from the 1940s to the mid-1980s.

These facilities processed tungsten, a material used in industry to harden steel. The tungsten ores were received from around the world and smelted to produce items such as tungsten carbide powder, tungsten wire, and welding rods. The heavy metals and radioactive ore residues from this production process contaminated the property.

In the mid-1980s, the Li Tungsten Corporation—the last in a series of site operators—went bankrupt, and the property was purchased by the Glen Cove Development Corporation.

New York State asked the EPA Region 2 to investigate the property’s land and nine buildings and to remove any contaminated waste left by the company.





An aerial view of the Li Tungsten Captain's Cove Site

The EPA found large quantities of hazardous materials, such as laboratory chemicals and polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB)-contaminated waste, in hundreds of rusted drums and in above- and belowground tanks. In addition, they discovered asbestos, transformers, and gas cylinders containing compressed liquids and gases, as well as elemental mercury spills on the property. An EPA contractor had the site remediated, and the most serious chemical and radioactive hazards were removed.

The EPA investigation also found low-level radiation and heavy metal contamination—posing a public health risk—in the soil throughout the 26-acre Li Tungsten facility, as well as in the nearby 23-acre Captain's Cove property that had been used as a dumping ground by area businesses and residents.

### Corps Assists EPA

In the spring of 2005, the EPA issued an Interagency Agreement with the Corps's New York District to perform remediation work at the Captain's Cove portion of the Li Tungsten Superfund Site. The work was performed by the Corps's Kansas City District, which was responsible for excavating the soil, separating the radioactive and metal-contaminated soil from the noncontaminated soil, and transporting the contaminated soil to appropriately licensed disposal facilities.

Approximately 87,500 tons of radioactive soil and 35,000 tons of metal-contaminated soil have been removed from the site and transported to disposal facilities. This cleanup, along with the future cleanup of other areas of the site, must be completed to allow for the development of the waterfront. Throughout the construction period, the public has been protected from any potential health threats by monitoring the

air quality and inspecting and cleaning trucks that enter and leave the property.

### Waterfront Development

The Li Tungsten Superfund Site properties are the centerpiece for the community's plans to revitalize 214 acres of the city's waterfront. Glen Cove Industrial Development Agency's goal is to link the city's nearby downtown shopping area with the waterfront. Thirty percent of the development will be comprised of parks, public squares, nature walks, and botanical gardens. Pedestrian-friendly walking paths will be lined with restaurants, art galleries, stores, and hotels. In addition, there will be luxury condominiums and various modes of public transportation (trolleys, electric carts, water taxis, and ferry service) to New York City.

The waterfront development is expected to create as many as 1,700 new full-time jobs and bring in new business that will generate an estimated \$200 million in annual sales. The Glen Cove waterfront development is expected to be completed in a decade.

To learn more about the waterfront development, visit [www.glencove-li.com](http://www.glencove-li.com) or for information about Superfund, visit the EPA Web site at [www.epa.gov/superfund](http://www.epa.gov/superfund).



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