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Debbie Mans Delivers Testimony to Keep EPA's Superfund Program Intact to Benefit Environmental Justice Communities

Testimony of Debbie Mans

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U.S. Congress House of Representatives

Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Environment

Congressman Frank Pallone, Jr., Member

Jan. 18, 2018 (Washington, DC) - Debbie Mans, Executive Director & Baykeeper, testified in front of the U.S. Congress House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Environment today during a hearing entitled "Modernizing the Superfund Cleanup Program."

The upper portion of the Passaic River Superfund site was recently identified by the US Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt as a Superfund site targeted for "immediate and intense action." The hearing was called to discuss this action, as well as issues associated with EPA's implementation of the Superfund program and whether there are changes that need to be made to the program to make it more efficient and effective.

"It is essential that human health and environmental protection be the top priority for taking action at Superfund sites, not just the reuse of sites," said Debbie Mans, Executive Director, NY/NJ Baykeeper.. "It is critical to keep the Superfund public participation program intact, through the use of Community Advisory Groups and technical assistance provided by the EPA." Ms. Mans currently serves as the co-chair of the Passaic River Superfund [Community Advisory Group \(CAG\)](#), along with Dr. Ana Baptista of The New School.

The hearing comes on the heels of recently released "[Superfund Task Force Recommendations](#)" commissioned by Administrator Pruitt. The Recommendations and other memos released by Administrator Pruitt place significant emphasis on moving decision-making from regional offices to EPA Headquarters, using third parties to oversee certain aspects of cleanups, phased approaches to cleanups, considering natural attenuation, and earlier promotion of reuse of sites.

“The requirement that EPA Administrator Pruitt’s Office be involved early-on and throughout the process of developing and evaluating alternatives and remedies appears to take the authority away from professional experts in the regional offices and place it with political appointees based in Washington, DC, and add a layer of bureaucracy to decisions,” said Mans. “The people who know these sites the best are the local EPA technical experts who come to our community meetings and inspect the sites, not someone sitting at desk hundreds of miles away.”

“It is important to note that while Administrator Pruitt has stated that the Superfund program is a cornerstone of the work that EPA performs for citizens and communities across the nation, President Trump has proposed slashing the EPA budget by 31%,” said Mans. “We thank Congressman Pallone for his leadership on making sure that New Jersey’s Superfund sites are top priority and fighting for full and timely cleanups for our communities.”

Background

The Passaic River Superfund site was first listed on the Superfund National Priorities List (NPL) in 1984, over 30 years ago, and includes 17 miles of the Passaic River, Newark Bay, and portions of the Hackensack River, Arthur Kill and Kill van Kull.

In March 2016, a Record of Decision was selected for the lower 8.3 miles of the River. The cleanup plan calls for dredging approximately 3.5 million cubic yards of contaminated sediment, bank to bank, and will cost \$1.36 billion. [Click here](#) to view the Record of Decision.

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[About NY/NJ Baykeeper](#)

NY/NJ Baykeeper is the citizen advocate of the NY-NJ Harbor Estuary. Since 1989, we’ve worked to protect, preserve, and restore the environment of the most urban estuary on Earth – benefiting its natural and human communities. Through our Estuary-wide programs we seek to end pollution, improve public access, conserve and restore public lands, restore aquatic habitats, encourage appropriate and discourage inappropriate development, carry out public education, and work with federal and NY/NJ state regulators and citizen groups as partners in planning for a sustainable future for the NY-NJ Harbor Estuary watershed.