

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration Program

Habitat Restoration Funded with Conrail Diesel Fuel Spill Settlement

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), along with other Federal and State Agencies and Indian Nations are Trustees of natural resources and are authorized by Superfund legislation to restore natural resources that have been harmed by the release of hazardous substances, such as diesel fuel and other chemicals. The USFWS and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation settled natural resource damage claims related to the Conrail Diesel Fuel Spill that occurred into Cayuga Inlet, a tributary to Cayuga Lake in Tompkins County. A total of \$219,235 was negotiated for natural resource restoration. Projects completed and described in this fact sheet include bank stabilization, release of 10 river otter, stocking of 3000 brown trout, and supplemental vegetative plantings along nearby stream restoration area.

Natural Resources and Impacts to those Resources

Cayuga Inlet is a Class C (TS) trout stream and is a tributary to Cayuga Lake. Cayuga Lake flows to Lake Ontario through the Seneca River and Oswego River Basin. Conrail estimated that a total of 5,000 gallons of diesel fuel were released into the environment during the November 1997 spill. The Trustees estimated that 5,951 fish were killed and that the spill killed wildlife, insect life, other biota and injured their supporting habitat in and around Cayuga Inlet.



Cayuga Inlet, Photo credit: USFWS

Stream Bank Stabilization

Stream bank stabilization techniques were implemented along 1,000 linear feet of Cayuga Inlet to reduce erosion and siltation. The restoration area had seriously eroded banks and also contained the highest number of juvenile trout per unit area. This section of Cayuga Inlet had the greatest need for improvement and the restoration improved the fish community and fishery as a whole

River Otter Restoration – Release of 10 River Otters

As part of the New York River Otter Restoration Project, Inc., 4 river otters were released in Jennings Pond, Tompkins County, and 6 were released in Spencer Lake, Tioga County. The goal of the New York



Photo credit: NYSDEC

River Otter Project was to restore river otter to the watersheds of western New York. Some of the release sites in western New York had been devoid of otter populations for longer than many local residents could remember, and the public was very excited about the project and the return of the otter to these watersheds. For more information on the river otter population in New York go to: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/9355.html>

Recreational Fish Stocking In Cayuga Lake

A total of 3,000 catchable size brown trout were stocked in Cayuga Lake at Taughannock Falls State Park in 2002 to offset fishing opportunity that was lost in Cayuga Inlet due to the spill.

Supplemental Restoration Plantings

Restoration funds from the Settlement were used to purchase vegetation to augment a nearby stream restoration project along Cayuga Inlet.

Cayuga Inlet stream restoration, Photo credit: USFWS



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