

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

GOVERNOR PHIL MURPHY

## AG, DEP ANNOUNCE “NEW DAY” FOR N.J. ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT; STATE FILES SIX MAJOR LAWSUITS FOCUSED ON CONTAMINATED PROPERTIES

*From the New Jersey Office of the Attorney General and New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection:*

*State Files First New Lawsuits Seeking Damages for Harm to Natural Resources in Ten Years*

**TRENTON** – Calling it a “new day” for environmental enforcement in New Jersey, Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal and Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Catherine R. McCabe announced today the filing of six separate lawsuits aimed at recovering damages for the harm caused by pollution to properties, groundwater, and waterways across the state, and to recover the costs the State has paid in conducting environmental clean-ups.

In three of the six cases, the State of New Jersey is seeking payment for damages to the State’s natural resources, known as “Natural Resource Damage” cases, or NRDs. Until today, the State had not initiated a new NRD case since 2008. These cases, which in the past have been worth millions of dollars, involve claims for the loss to the value and use of natural resources, including surface and ground water, sediments, and wetlands. And three cases involve efforts by the State of New Jersey to recover taxpayer money that was spent addressing contaminations, and are known as “cost recovery cases.” These lawsuits seek compensation from the parties responsible for pollution at each site.

Acting Governor Sheila Oliver praised the renewed focus on enforcing New Jersey’s environmental laws. “For years, companies have failed to act responsibly, endangering the health of New Jersey and its citizens,” **said Acting Governor Oliver**. “Today we are sending a clear message that we will do everything in our power to hold these companies accountable and protect New Jerseyans. By taking necessary legal action, New Jersey continues to bolster its reputation as a national champion for the environment and staunch defender of public health.”

“This is the largest single-day environmental enforcement action in New Jersey in at least a decade,” **said Attorney General Grewal**. “Today is just the beginning. We are going to hold polluters accountable – no matter how big, no matter how powerful, no matter how long they’ve been getting away with it. And we’re sending a message to every company across the state: if you pollute our natural resources, we are going to make you pay.”

“Natural resource damage cases are an important way that we protect New Jersey’s environment. They are a primary mechanism for restoring our natural environment when it has become polluted or damaged by industrial or other human activities,” **said Commissioner McCabe**. “New Jersey has always been well known nationally for its leadership in environmental protection, and our Attorney General’s environmental legal staff has a well-earned reputation as one of the best in the country. I was very surprised to learn, upon arriving at DEP in January, that New Jersey had filed no new Natural Resource Damage cases in the entire eight years of the Christie Administration.”

The lawsuits span the state, covering areas in the North and South, and that are rural and urban. As described in the attached fact sheet, the suits involve six different sites:

- (1) The Pohatcong Valley Superfund Site in Warren County, which has a stretch of groundwater contamination up to 9 miles long;
- (1) The former site of the Ronson Metals Corporation, a cigarette lighter manufacturing facility in the Ironbound District of Newark, on which residential homes were subsequently built;

(2) The former site of Ruggiero Seaford, Inc., another manufacturing facility in the Ironbound, where a school was recently built. (The site was remediated at a cost of millions of dollars by the Schools Development Authority (SDA), and today's action is designed to recover the cost of that clean-up.)

(3) The former Hess petroleum refinery in the Port Reading section of Woodbridge;

(4) A former retail Mobil gas station in the Fords section of Woodbridge; and

(5) The former site of manufactured gas plant, now owned by Deull Fuel Company, near the Beach Thorofare waterway in Atlantic City.

The three "NRD" cases are the Pohatcong Valley Superfund Site, the Port Reading refinery, and the Deull Fuel site in Atlantic City.

"The DEP and the Attorney General's Office will once again be a dedicated team," Commissioner McCabe said, "committed to safeguarding and improving the quality of our air, waters and land for all of New Jersey's residents, no matter where they live."

"Today, we're back in the environmental enforcement business," said Attorney General Grewal, who announced the six lawsuits along with Commissioner McCabe at press conferences in both Newark's Ironbound District and in Atlantic City. "The truth is that environmental pollution affects us all, North and South, rural and urban, rich and poor. That's why it matters to everyone that we are going after the polluters who damaged New Jersey's precious natural resources and failed to properly clean up their mess. In the coming months my Office will aggressively bring even more Natural Resource Damage cases throughout the State, taking to task polluters who have harmed our environment."

The attached fact sheet includes background information and allegations for each of the six environmental enforcement actions filed today.

Photographs of the six sites are available at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/njoag/albums>  
(<https://www.flickr.com/photos/njoag/albums>)

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