

UNLOCKING UTICA HARBOR: A RESTORATION CASE STUDY

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Utica Harbor was created during the 1918 expansion of the Erie Canal. This newly-constructed manmade harbor provided expanded water borne transportation to meet the developing industrial needs of the City of Utica. Harbor Point is approximately 140 acres of land located between Utica Harbor and the Mohawk River. The New York State Canal Corporation operates a canal maintenance facility on the southern and eastern sides of the harbor, a navigation lock to connect Utica Harbor to the Erie Canal, and a dam spanning the Mohawk River to maintain stable water levels in Utica Harbor conducive to navigation. The Utica Canal Maintenance Facility serves to provide rehabilitation of the Canal Corporation's water based equipment.

Harbor Point was developed for industrial purposes in the mid 1800's and has been the site of two manufactured gas plants (MGPs), a coal-fired steam plant, a petroleum storage and distribution facility (Mohawk Valley Oil) and a tar products plant (New York Tar Emulsions

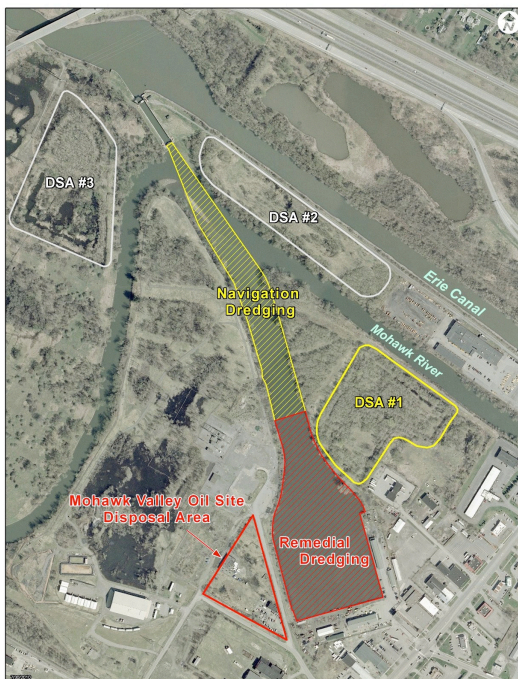
Products (NYTEP). Based on the intermodal connection provided by the Erie Canal, Harbor Point was the location of the largest energy-producing complex in North America in the 1920s.

Coal tar, a byproduct of manufacturing gas, was released to the environment resulting in the contamination of soil and groundwater at the Harbor Point site and contamination of sediment within the Utica Harbor. Several environmental remedial programs are being implemented to address this contamination.

National Grid has undertaken a large-scale soil removal project and a sediment dredging project as part of the environmental cleanup of the Niagara Mohawk Harbor Point and Mohawk Valley Oil inactive hazardous waste disposal sites. The cleanup activities were performed by National Grid with oversight provided by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation through New York's State Superfund Program. The New York State Canal Corporation completed the navigation dredging of Utica Harbor.

A case study of the restoration of the Utica Harbor, including remedial and navigation dredging, the navigation lock, and the Utica Harbor Dam will be provided to illustrate the steps that are being taken to return Utica Harbor to a fully functional component of the New York State Canal System and to increase the economic development potential of the region.

The City of Utica's ultimate vision for Harbor Point is addressed in the 2008 legislation that calls for the transfer of the remediated Canal Corporation's Utica Harbor lands to the City of Utica for the purpose of restoring Utica's economic vitality of the Utica Harbor area. This proposal offers an historic opportunity to expand the local economy, provide job opportunities, expand tourism and recreational related industry, and increase municipal revenue for the City of Utica and the overall Mohawk Valley region.



Utica Harbor General Overview

In: Cockburn, J.M.H. and Garver, J.I., *Proceedings of the 2011 Mohawk Watershed Symposium*, Union College, Schenectady, NY, March 18, 2011