

JUSTICE NEWS

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Honeywell to Restore Onondaga Lake Natural Resources Under Proposed Agreement With The United States and The State of New York

The Departments of Justice and the Interior joined with the New York State Office of the Attorney General (NYSOAG) and Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) today to announce a proposed settlement with Honeywell International Inc. (Honeywell) and Onondaga County related to contamination of Onondaga Lake, portions of its tributaries, and surrounding wetlands and uplands.

The proposal would resolve claims brought under the federal Superfund law for damages to natural resources stemming from releases of mercury and other hazardous substances from facilities owned and operated by Honeywell (formerly Allied-Signal) and Onondaga County at the Onondaga Lake Superfund Site in Syracuse, New York.

As part of its operations over many years, Honeywell contributed hazardous substances that resulted in the contamination of Onondaga Lake, portions of its tributaries, and surrounding wetlands and uplands. Hazardous substances from Onondaga County's operations made their way into Onondaga Lake as well. Federal Superfund law seeks to make the environment and public whole for injuries to natural resources and ecological and recreational services resulting from releases of hazardous substances to the environment.

The proposed settlement requires Honeywell to implement and maintain 20 restoration projects to restore and protect wildlife habitat and water quality, and increase recreational opportunities at Onondaga Lake. Honeywell will also pay over \$6 million allocated to restoration and preservation programs overseen by the federal and state trustees, Department of Interior, and the Commissioner of Environmental Conservation acting through NYSDEC.

Onondaga County will operate, repair, maintain, and monitor five of these restoration projects located on or adjacent to County parklands for 25 years. The settlement terms are outlined in a proposed consent decree filed in federal court in Syracuse, New York today. The total value of this proposed settlement is \$26 million.

"This settlement will help restore the precious natural resources of the Onondaga Lake watershed, bringing lasting benefits for future generations of Central New Yorkers to enjoy," said Acting Assistant Attorney General Jeff Wood for the Department of Justice Environment and Natural Resources Division. "This joint action with the Department of Interior and the State of New York is yet another testament to the value and effectiveness of cooperative federalism, and I am grateful to all of our partners for the efforts that brought us this resolution."

"With this proposed settlement, the communities of Onondaga Lake are one step closer to reclaiming this resource for the people and wildlife that live here," said New York Field Supervisor David Stilwell for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "These funds would support both habitat restoration and protection for the benefit of fish and wildlife, as well as improved opportunities for people to enjoy Onondaga Lake and all that it could offer. We look forward to continuing collaboration with the state, county, Honeywell, and surrounding communities."

"This settlement marks a critical step toward returning Onondaga Lake to the community that surrounds it – requiring the investment of millions to restore and protect water quality, wildlife, and recreation," said Bureau Chief Lem Srolovic for the Environmental Protection Bureau of the Office of the New York Attorney General. "We encourage

members of the community to review the settlement during the comment period, and look forward to continuing to work in partnership to ensure the restoration of this remarkable natural resource.”

“This proposed agreement is another significant step in the remarkable restoration of Onondaga Lake,” said Commissioner Basil Seggos of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. “DEC looks forward to the successful implementation of these projects and working with the community on the development of additional restoration work available under the settlement. The input from the public on the recovery of Onondaga Lake has been invaluable, and implementation of this restoration plan will return this unique natural resource to the surrounding community for use and enjoyment that has been unavailable for decades.”

This past August, the trustees, through U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the State of New York, issued a final restoration plan and environmental assessment plan outlining these 20 restoration projects to restore the Lake and wildlife habitat and improve recreational resources. This plan also included responses to oral and written comments received from the public on the draft plan during a 90-day public comment period, which included four public meetings and one public hearing held throughout Syracuse during the spring 2017.

Since 2008, Honeywell and the trustees have worked together to assess and identify potential restoration projects to benefit natural resources affected by releases of mercury and other hazardous substances. Some of the damaged natural resources include fish, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and mammals. Recreational fishing opportunities were also impacted by mercury contamination.

Today’s proposed settlement, lodged with the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of New York, is subject to a 30-day public comment period to begin following notification in the Federal Register. The settlement is subject to final approval by the court. To view the proposed consent decree, visit the department’s website: www.justice.gov/enrd/Consent_Decrees.html.

More information about the Onondaga Lake Natural Resource Damage Assessment is online at <https://www.fws.gov/northeast/nyfo/ec/onondaga.htm>.

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