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Last updated on Friday, April 4th, 2008.

Brownfields and Land Revitalization

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Brownfields Showcase Community Fact Sheet

Metlakatla Indian Community, Alaska

Brownfields are abandoned, idled or underused industrial and commercial properties where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived contamination. In May 1997, Vice President Gore announced a Brownfields National Partnership to bring together the resources of more than 15 federal agencies to address local cleanup and reuse issues in a more coordinated manner. This multi-agency partnership has pledged support to 16 "Brownfields Showcase Communities"—models demonstrating the benefits of collaborative activity on brownfields. The designated Brownfields Showcase Communities are distributed across the country and vary by size, resources, and community type. A wide range of support will be leveraged, depending on the particular needs of each Showcase Community.

Community Profile

Metlakatla Indian Community, Alaska

The Metlakatla Indian Community will use its Showcase Community designation to promote sustainable economic development through the assessment, cleanup, and redevelopment of brownfields sites on the Metlakatla Peninsula. The industrial, commercial, and recreational uses planned for these sites will result in the protection of natural resources and the strengthening of an economy weakened by underutilized facilities and unknown contamination.

Background

The Brownfields National Partnership has selected the Metlakatla Indian Community (MIC) as a Brownfields Showcase Community. MIC is a federally designated Enterprise Community. The Annette Islands Reserve is the only federal Indian reservation in the State of Alaska. Its 86,000 acres have supported timber and fishing industries for more than 100 years for the 2,430 enrolled members of the tribe, half of whom live on the reservation. In 1940, the United States Army established an air base on 12,783 acres of land located six miles south of the Town of Metlakatla. Until that point, no development existed on the peninsula outside of the town or its immediate surroundings. The new construction

brought runways, taxi routes, hangars, storage tanks and facilities, housing, docks, a hospital, and infrastructure improvements to water, sewage, and communications. These improvements also resulted in contamination.

At the end of World War II, however, the installation was quickly vacated. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) leased the airport in 1948 for use as the Ketchikan Airport. Control shifted to the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) in 1956, but by 1973 the airport had been moved to a new facility closer to Ketchikan, and all remaining airport support activity ceased in 1977. A 1996 preliminary assessment of the Metlakatla Peninsula identified more than 80 sites associated with former federal facilities; 72 of these have environmental concerns, including leaking drums, asbestos, lead, pesticides, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), chemical and oil spills, and leaking above- and underground storage tanks. As the result of a devastating fishing season and the federal shutdown of timber harvesting in 1995, the MIC Council declared its community an "economic disaster area" in 1997.

MIC is targeting three priority brownfields-the Smuggler Cove Radio Relay site, which is currently being used as a community-owned power utility facility; a former power plant, which is currently abandoned; and the main hangar building at the airport, which is currently being used as a forest products facility. The Showcase Community partnership effort will facilitate environmental cleanup and economic expansion at the sites currently in use and promote cleanup and reuse at the abandoned power plant.

Current Activities and Achievements

MIC has developed numerous plans and guidance, including a Comprehensive Development Plan for the community, a Land Use Plan, a Coastal Management Plan, a Master Plan for Environmental Mitigation of the Metlakatla Peninsula, and a Coordinated Comprehensive Cleanup Plan. Efforts related to activities outlined in these plans include:

- Submitting 17 sites with redevelopment potential to EPA in 1999 (Only four of the peninsula's sites are zoned for industrial use, but three of those have been identified as having high redevelopment potential); and
- Establishing a community-based Environmental Restoration Advisory Committee in 1997 to provide guidance and channel community input on all environmental issues facing the community.

MIC has formed partnerships with federal, state, and local entities to address brownfields issues. Partnerships include:

- EPA, which has conducted targeted brownfields

assessments in 1999 on three priority sites.

- Bureau of Indian Affairs and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), with which MIC signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in March 1998 for investigation and cleanup of contaminated sites in the community. USACE has removed a number of underground storage tanks, drums, and debris.
- FAA, with which MIC signed an MOU in July 1998, has removed 500,000 pounds of PCB-contaminated soil, 8,000 pounds of PCB-contaminated oils, 200 transformers, 10,000 gallons of contaminated fuel, and 5,000 pounds of asbestos, lead-based paints, and oil wastes.
- USCG, which has removed underground storage tanks and a PCB transformer.
- Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, which has made the Annette Islands Reserve one of six communities in Alaska considered to be a top priority for health assessment work in 2001.
- Department of Defense, whose Native American Lands Environmental Mitigation Program provided funding for MIC to perform asbestos abatement at seven sites in 1999.

Showcase Community Objectives and Planned Activities

The Metlakatla Indian Community plans to use the Showcase Community designation to create an integrated brownfields plan with substantial federal partner involvement. Completion of planning and cleanup efforts at the three priority sites will spur their redevelopment and/or expanded use, resulting in 10 to 20 new jobs. In addition, the reuse of these sites will provide an economic shift for a community that has been solely dependent on natural resources for its survival. MIC further hopes to promote tribal self-governance and determination and serve as a model for other tribal communities addressing similar environmental and economic transition issues.

Contacts

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For more information on the Brownfields Showcase Communities, visit the EPA Brownfields web site at:

<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/showcase.htm>

United States
Environmental
Protection Agency
Washington, D.C. 20460

Solid Waste
and Emergency
Response (5105)

EPA 500-F-00-228
October 2000

Outreach and Special Projects Staff (5105)

Quick Reference
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