



Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

Reuse & Redevelopment Initiative

Brownfield Bulletin

Revitalizing Communities through the Redevelopment of Contaminated Properties

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Welcome

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Thank you for taking the time to read about [DEC's Reuse and Redevelopment Initiative](#), which focuses on revitalizing brownfields across Alaska. Recycling contaminated properties provides benefits to our communities on many levels. DEC supports the role that individuals and communities play in identifying, assessing, and cleaning up these sites for reuse and redevelopment. Please feel free to contact us with questions, concerns, ideas, and brownfield sites when you come across them. We are here to help you!

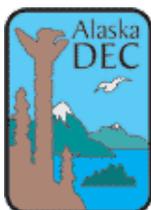
Brownfields do not just detract from a single property or business—their problems often extend to neighboring properties and even a whole community. We need to focus on cleaning up these sites to keep our neighborhoods healthy, increase the value of our properties, and provide housing and jobs where people live and work.

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Noyes Slough Awarded Targeted Brownfield Assessment

Congratulations to the Tanana Valley Watershed Association (TVWA) for their recent award of a Targeted Brownfield Assessment (TBA) of Noyes Slough. This 5-mile stretch of slow-moving water branches off the Chena River and meanders through the City of Fairbanks from its head about 500 feet downstream from the Wendell Street Bridge to its mouth just upstream from the University Avenue bridge. The city, borough, community groups, and state and federal agencies have been concerned about the slough and its potential contamination and hydrological problems for years. These groups also share the goal of restoring and enhancing valuable fish habitat in Noyes Slough. DEC brownfield staff worked closely with the TVWA on its successful request for this assistance



Noyes Slough looking downstream after flow ceased in midsummer 2000, at West Johansen Expressway bridge.

Previous Issues of
DEC's Brownfield
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from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to study the potential for revitalization of the slough as a community asset and recreational resource.

Because of its central location, Noyes Slough has the potential for being a readily accessible and scenic canoe trail right through town. However, because of a significant reduction in water flow into the slough resulting from the Chena River flood control project, and the construction of dams by numerous beaver-engineers, much of the slough is stagnant and impassable. Historically, Noyes Slough has seen environmentally "unfriendly" waste handling practices and open dumping, and the slough is currently listed as an [impaired water body](#) with DEC and EPA for sediment, petroleum hydrocarbons, oil and grease, and residues. Thus, the options for future use of the slough are limited without some sort of action toward restoration.

Grass-roots organizations, such as the Noyes Slough Action Committee, and K-12 school groups, such as the [Noyes Slough Project](#), established by students at Anne Wien Elementary School, highlighted the environmental problems in the slough to the public's attention several years ago. Moreover, a significant amount of environmental data have already been collected as part of previous assessments. Cleanup efforts carried out by the elementary school students, the Noyes Slough Action Committee, neighborhood groups, and government agencies have resulted in the slough's being much cleaner than it was years ago, but a great deal of work remains to be done. In general, the people of Fairbanks believe the slough is a special place worthy of being restored, and most envision a future of clean, flowing water for both recreation and wildlife habitat.

Because of the slough's complex hydrology, its history of environmental problems, and the variety of potential reuse scenarios proposed by multiple parties, the TBA will focus on facilitating a *systematic planning* approach before any further environmental sampling occurs. Input from stakeholders will be critical to the planning process and to balancing the diverse range of goals and options for the future of the slough.

The TBA will attempt to compile existing information on the slough in the context of the revitalization goals identified through the public involvement process. Identifying potential reuse and engineering concerns, and evaluating future assessment strategies to provide the greatest benefit are critical before further data are collected. This planning process will be implemented by a team of specialists and will involve extensive participation by community, local government, and agency representatives. The planned approach is part of the [Triad](#) process and will be facilitated by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers staff. The Triad process involves three components: systematic planning, a dynamic workplan approach, and use of real-time measurement technologies. Comprehensive and upfront planning, with key stakeholder involvement, is essential to designing and implementing any successful environmental restoration of Noyes Slough.



Noyes Slough looking downstream showing channel filled with snow and ice in late winter, at West Johansen Expressway bridge.

Photographs in this article courtesy of the [U.S. Geological Survey](#), *Preliminary Hydraulic Analysis and Implications for Restoration of Noyes Slough, Fairbanks, Alaska*, Water-Resources Investigations Report 00-4227, By Robert L. Burrows, Dustin E. Langley, and David M. Evetts.

For more information, contact:

[Nancy Ihlendfeldt](#), the [Tanana Valley Watershed Association](#), or

[Sonja Benson](#).

Need Help with an Environmental Assessment? DEC's Brownfield Assessment Request Period Opens in March 2007

The DEC Brownfield Assessment (DBA) program has been an important component of the Contaminated Sites Program's Reuse and Redevelopment Initiative for several years. The DBA program allows communities to request an environmental assessment on eligible brownfields when a reuse interest is hindered by potential or real contamination on the site. This is a free service offered to eligible applicants seeking this important information. The assessment service is currently available to villages, city or borough governments, state agencies, Native corporations, nonprofits, and economic development organizations.

The intent of a DBA is to help reduce the environmental uncertainties associated with the reuse or redevelopment of brownfield properties. The objectives of a DBA are the following:

- Determine whether a site is clean, slightly contaminated, or heavily contaminated
- Determine the nature and extent of contamination and its possible impact on the potential use of the property
- Identify potential cleanup options for the site, or further assessment requirements
- Provide an estimation of the cleanup costs (if any)

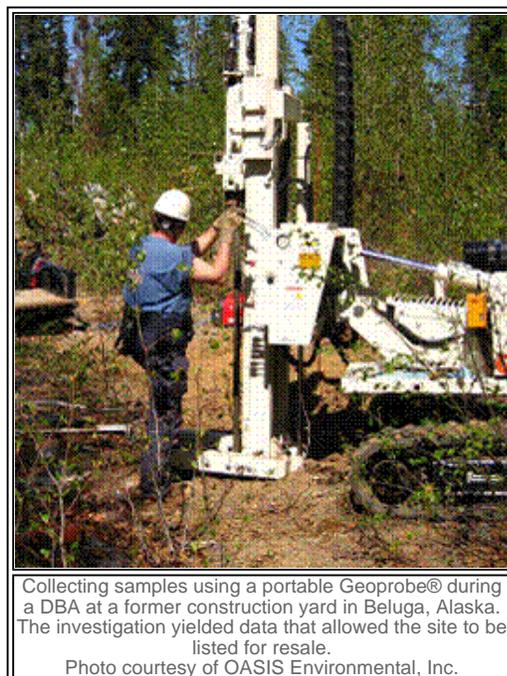
The DBA application process is not complicated; it consists of general questions about the ownership, history, location, problem, and development or reuse potential. We received seven DBA requests last year, of which all were funded. To date, the number of requests has rarely exceeded our funding capacity; most that applied and were eligible received an assessment of their site. Since this assessment may be the foundation of any future request for cleanup funding, it could be the key to "recycling" your brownfield into whatever you envision.

Each fiscal year DEC allocates a specific amount of funding to conduct brownfield assessments. We have historically been able to complete as many as five or more assessments of varying complexity. The open period for submitting DBA request forms will begin in March and will remain open for 45 days. Our intent is to review the requests, prioritize projects, and initiate assessment work in July when funding becomes available. We will be developing new DBA request forms and fact sheets and will post this information on our web page and through our brownfield mailing list.

DEC conducts site assessments at brownfield sites across the state where environmental conditions hinder the reuse or redevelopment of a site, or where contamination is suspected of directly limiting the use of a subsistence resource. The DBA program has received requests for assessments at more than 25 sites, and has allocated nearly \$470,000 in DBA services to date. Some properties have been sold, others are still in the assessment stage, and some properties have successfully gone on to obtain cleanup funding through EPA's brownfield grants program (no state funds are currently available for brownfield cleanup). If you think you have a brownfield site that needs an assessment, please let us know. Review our website for information on eligibility criteria, or give us a call. Now is the time to start thinking about brownfields. A simple request may be just what your community needs to turn brownfield blight into a valuable asset.

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Collecting samples using a portable Geoprobe® during a DBA at a former construction yard in Beluga, Alaska. The investigation yielded data that allowed the site to be listed for resale.
Photo courtesy of OASIS Environmental, Inc.

Native Village of Tununak Receives Brownfield Grant on Behalf of Nelson Island Consortium

The small village of Tununak, Alaska, is located on the northeast coast of Nelson Island, about 110 miles northwest of Bethel. Tununak is one of seven tribes that form the Nelson Island Consortium, an inter-tribal coalition that has shared regional traditional subsistence grounds for thousands of years. Nelson Island residents depend heavily on these resources, which account for 82 percent of their diet intake, and Yup'ik is spoken as the first language in each village. The interests of more than 2,500 persons are addressed through the Nelson Island Consortium. Just this past year the consortium was the recipient of a State & Tribal Response Program (STRP) grant—its first source of brownfield funding.



Native Village of Tununak, Nelson Island, Alaska. Photo courtesy of the Native Village of Tununak.

Subsistence activities, Newtok, Alaska. Photo courtesy of the Native Village of Tununak.

Why did they choose to pursue a brownfield grant? The consortium identified problems that are pervasive in most Alaska communities: releases of contaminants that may pose a threat to their health, environment, and future. The presence of contaminated sites directly affects their ability to use their land until the problem is rectified, and may even pose a continuing health risk to residents and wildlife. Rural Alaska communities have tank farms, dump sites, and sewage lagoons alongside their water supplies, schools, and subsistence resources. The management of all of these are closely related.

First and foremost, the Nelson Island Consortium intends to conduct a methodical documentation of each site that people are concerned about. This initial documentation will help establish a baseline from which they can take action on priority sites; first through conducting an inventory, then completing assessments and quantifying the problems, and finally prioritizing sites for cleanup based on the needs of the consortium. The establishment of an inventory is the primary task of brownfield STRP grantees. DEC has spoken with the program manager, Molly Afcan, and we look forward to working together to help Nelson Island establish their brownfield program.

[John Carnahan](#)
DEC Brownfield Coordinator

Tribes Receive Funding to Build Brownfield Capacity—Is This Grant Right for Your Community?

Last April we ran a story about the potential brownfield funding available to Alaskan tribes and tribal consortia through EPA's State & Tribal Response Program (STRP) grants. This funding is provided to both states and tribes across the country to help establish "brownfield programs" and the capacity to manage brownfield issues in their communities or regions. Several Alaskan tribes have received this funding, including the Native Council of Port Heiden, the Anvik Tribal Council, the Woody Island Tribal Council, the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council (YRITWC), and most recently, the Nelson Island Consortium. This year we are pleased that two more consortia may seek this brownfield assistance for next year.

Is this funding a good fit for your community? The answer is likely yes! But no funding comes without some effort. One of our objectives in the next year will be to help communities understand how best to successfully apply for this funding opportunity in a manner that maximizes results and minimizes

the paperwork. We encourage villages to capitalize on existing consortia or other subregional relationships to facilitate an application on behalf of multiple communities. There truly is strength in numbers.

As an example, the YRITWC used its STRP grant to survey environmental conditions in more than 20 watershed communities. Identifying known and potential brownfield sites is a primary element of any brownfield program. Training is also a focus of the YRITWC grant, and last May they brought together representatives from the 20 communities to discuss the brownfield program, how to identify and document sites, and how to work together on establishing a brownfield inventory. The amount of information obtained through these two tasks alone was great, and it built the foundation for future work to come.

The brownfield grant received by the YRITWC was used to complement the watershed communities' Indian General Assistance Program (IGAP) grants, extending services to areas that otherwise may not have brownfield funding. Unlike IGAP, it is doubtful that the EPA Brownfield Program can support individual grants to all tribes in Alaska; there simply are not enough funds. Working cooperatively increases the opportunities for capacity development provided by both types of funding.

Although it is certainly not a requirement, we highly encourage tribes to consider working together with their neighbors to establish subregional consortia when seeking STRP funding. Many more Alaska communities may be able to reap the benefits of these grants when working together to identify sites, educate their residents, review their reuse and redevelopment goals, and provide training through this unique funding opportunity. Many tribes already have environmental coordinators, funded through IGAP, who can be a great asset in putting this program together. DEC is planning to focus its outreach in the next year to help Alaskan tribal consortia apply for STRP funding, and we request your input in how to best coordinate this effort.

Still wonder if an STRP grant is right for you?
Please contact our brownfield office anytime at 451-2166 or 451-2156.

[John Carnahan](#)
DEC Brownfield Coordinator

Save the Date: Next National Brownfields Conference in Detroit, May 2008

The next (12th) National Brownfields Conference will be held in the Cobo Convention Center in Detroit, May 5-7, 2008. Detroit is a perfect brownfield setting with its history of urban industrialization and its current economic problems. Watch our web pages and the conference website, listed below, for information on this upcoming national event.

The 11th Annual National Brownfields Conference was held in historic Boston, Massachusetts, November 13-15, 2006. This meeting's title was "Brownfields 2006: A Revolution in Redevelopment and Revitalization." Nearly 6,000 people attended this conference, held at the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center. This facility is itself a former brownfield site with a 100-year history as an industrial and commercial hub, railroad distribution center, and junkyard. Its redevelopment has served as a catalyst for the revitalization of Boston's Waterfront District, formerly known as the "Fish Pier." The conference featured an extensive schedule of plenary sessions, keynote events, panel presentations, roundtable discussions, poster sessions, vendors' exhibits, mobile workshops, and a film series. We encourage anyone interested in brownfields,



Best community development poster, Boston Brownfields Conference, November 2006. Photo courtesy of Brownfields 2006.

including community planners, real estate developers, financiers, representatives of state and local governments, and especially brownfield grantees, to attend this important conference and take advantage of the incredible array of educational and networking opportunities.

To see the agenda or to download the Monday-Wednesday editions of the 2006 Brownfields Conference Newspaper, or to sign up for news and updates about the Detroit conference, visit the conference website: www.brownfields2006.org.

[Sonja Benson](#)

Brownfield Program Specialist

Not on DEC's *Reuse and Redevelopment* electronic mailing list?

Please click [here](#) to sign up to be on our list and ensure you get the latest information on DEC's Reuse and Redevelopment Initiative! Or visit our web page to sign up.

This *DEC Brownfield Bulletin* is meant as a simple means to disseminate news across the state to those interested in brownfield developments. Please feel free to forward this to anyone you believe would be interested. If you have issues or stories that you would like to submit, please send them to us and we will incorporate them on your behalf. If you would like to have your name removed from this distribution, simply email us and it will be done!