



Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

Reuse & Redevelopment Initiative

Brownfield Bulletin

Revitalizing Communities through the Recycling of Contaminated Properties

Vol. 07-3 ~ Fall 2007 **Welcome**

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Welcome to the Fall edition of the DEC Brownfield Bulletin. We appreciate your taking the time to read about [DEC's Reuse and Redevelopment Initiative](#), which focuses on recycling land and revitalizing brownfields across Alaska.

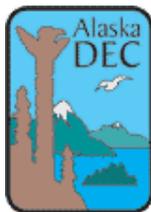
Brownfields have come a long way in the past few years in Alaska. It is now a term that we associate with funding, community action, and hope. Interest in brownfields continues to grow across the country because of the focus on reuse and recycling. It makes environmental and economic sense to reuse our pre-existing infrastructure whenever possible. Alaskans must continue to be creative when seeking out viable brownfield projects. Community planning and cooperation, along with persistence, will pay off. Every community has its brownfields, and it may seem impossible to get your site the recognition it deserves. But you don't have to face it alone. This is why we need more community involvement, better communication, and increased visibility of these brownfield issues. Millions of dollars are spent annually on development projects across Alaska. With proper foresight and planning, we can begin to incorporate more and more brownfield revitalization into those projects, decreasing the impact on our environment, minimizing the cost of cleanup, and improving the local standard of living. Thank you for caring about your brownfields — together we will continue to make progress.

[DEC Brownfield
Webpage](#)
[Contaminated Sites
Webpage](#)

John Carnahan
DEC Brownfield Coordinator

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Other sites of Interest



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Application Period for State and Tribal Response Program Grants Now Open

DEC Proposes the Use of Tribal Consortia to Increase Funding to Alaska

The proposal guidelines for State and Tribal Response Program grants are now available. Click [here](#) (pdf 83 k) or [here](#) (MS Word 131 k) to download a copy of the guidelines. Requests for funding will be accepted from December 1, 2007, through January 31, 2008.

We have run previous articles about the *State & Tribal Response Program* (STRP or "Brownfield") grants from EPA, and we would like to encourage tribal consortia to consider the possibility that this grant might be right for your region. These grants are available to individual states, tribes, and tribal consortia across the United States as capacity-building grants to help establish "brownfield" programs. DEC is currently requesting tribal consortia to apply as part of an Alaska Brownfield Environmental Assessment and Revitalization (BEAR) Program, that will include brownfield programs in rural communities across our state.

A well designed regional brownfield grant can complement tribal environmental programs and assist communities that may otherwise not be able to apply for and manage this funding. Brownfield funding



[EPA Region 10
Brownfields](#)

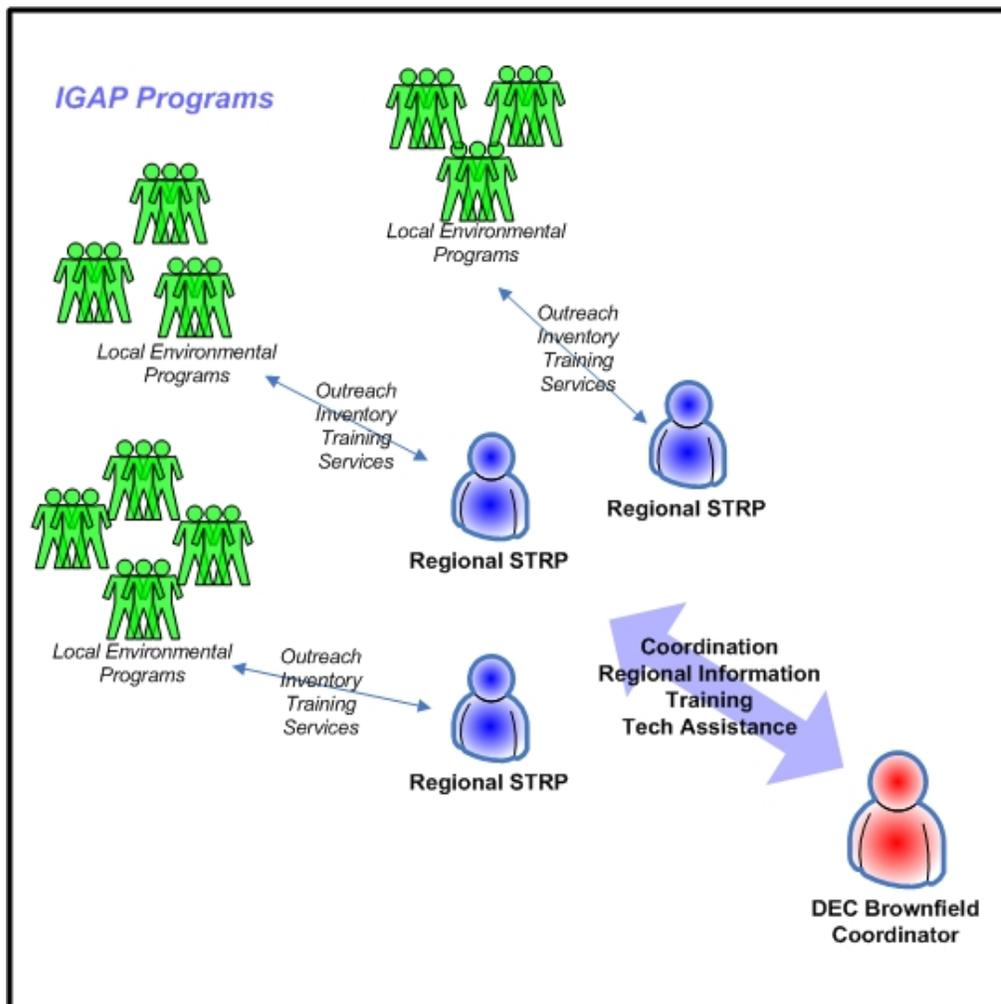
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[version of our newsletter in PDF \(234 K\) format click here.](#) <Update>

Previous Issues of DEC's Brownfield Bulletin

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allows communities to focus on specific revitalization efforts, whereas EPA's Indian General Assistance Program (IGAP) grant does not. With a strong IGAP program in place, and supplementary brownfield services and training made available through regional brownfield programs, tribes will be better situated to independently manage spill prevention and environmental assessment, cleanup, and redevelopment projects.



Under the Alaska BEAR Program, regional tribal consortia (blue) can provide services to multiple tribal environmental programs (green), and in turn coordinate with DEC's brownfield program (red). Information flows freely across all levels, and resources are shared.

Because the funding available through EPA's Brownfield Program is limited, many more villages will be able to reap the benefits of brownfield assistance if they work together to share resources. Many tribes already have IGAP environmental coordinators who can be an incredible asset in ensuring the success of a regional brownfield program.

One of our objectives in the coming weeks will be to help tribal consortia understand how best to apply for this funding opportunity in a manner that maximizes results, limits duplicate efforts, and minimizes the paperwork. Successful applicants can then in turn assist the communities in their regions with identifying and revitalizing their brownfields. In the end, we would like to establish a strong tribally led program that can coordinate community needs across Alaska. We encourage tribes to capitalize on existing consortia or other regional relationships to develop an application encompassing multiple communities.

With six to ten regional STRP grants in the state, we believe that more than three quarters of Alaska's rural communities could be included in the overarching Alaska BEAR Program. There definitely is strength in numbers!

The Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council (YRITWC) exemplifies how regional outreach can benefit many villages. In the last three years, YRITWC has been able to visit more than 30 Yukon River communities, inventory 229 sites, complete 4 brownfield assessments, provide brownfield training to more than 40 tribal environmental program directors, and share valuable information with DEC that led directly to additional assessment work. This level of effort is beyond the funding capacity of the DEC brownfield program alone, and without the YRITWC, many of these Yukon River villages would not yet have been surveyed for potential brownfields. For more information on YRITWC's brownfield program, please visit their website at www.yritwc.com, or contact Charlene Stern, YRITWC brownfield program manager, at (907) 451-2558, or email Charlene at cstern@yritwc.com.

Together we can develop an Alaska BEAR Program that will meet the needs of our communities. While the first year may start a bit slow as you develop your capacity and get individual staff on board, before you know it you will have identified specific brownfields in your region, and will have already come up with ideas for revitalizing them. Brownfields are real, they are everywhere, and together we can do something about it.

Please contact Sonja Benson (Sonja.Benson@alaska.gov) or John Carnahan (John.Carnahan@alaska.gov) or call 451-2156, to discuss your organization's interest in this funding.

[John Carnahan](#)
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For more information about the STRP grant, please visit EPA's Brownfield website:
http://www.epa.gov/swerosps/bf/state_tribal.htm

Team Effort Addresses Weeks Field Redevelopment Project in Fairbanks

Through close coordination with the City of Fairbanks and the Weeks Field Development Group, DEC facilitated the award of a much sought after Targeted Brownfield Assessment (TBA) from the EPA Region 10 Brownfield Program, on behalf of the City of Fairbanks. The TBA was conducted at the site of an old housing project, Fairview Manor, which was constructed in 1951. These apartments were built over what was once the primary airstrip for the Fairbanks area. The Weeks Field Airstrip (also known as the Weeks Ball Park, where many of the first local baseball games took place) ran directly through the lots that now house the Noel Wien Library and Fairview Manor, and ended at the current location of the Carlson Center on the Chena River. Weeks Field operated between 1923 and 1950 when operations were moved to the Fairbanks International Airport. All that is now visible of the former airstrip is the old Pan America hangar that is now the Arctic Bowl bowling alley and commercial center.



Looking east at Weeks Field, July 1930. Aerial photo from Alaska's Digital Archives, courtesy of Chris Kennedy.

Residential development surrounded the airstrip and immediately took over the site when Weeks Field ceased operations. The Fairview Manor complex was built on City of Fairbanks property under a 75-year lease agreement. Although these buildings provided much needed housing in their day, two of the buildings are currently closed, and the remaining buildings are in great need of repair. Development opportunities are ripe for this site because of its central location and proximity to schools, shopping, the library, the hospital, and downtown. The people of Fairbanks stand to benefit

from and overwhelmingly support the proposed development plans, which include a mixed-use residential complex with affordable housing for families and a retirement community, an assisted living facility, and support services to include adult and child care, physical therapy, and medical offices.

Commercial property transactions typically involve an audit or assessment to identify environmental conditions that could affect development costs, or even preclude new construction plans. Concerns were first identified at this site when the ownership of the buildings changed hands in 1992, and a site assessment identified solvent and petroleum contamination. This contamination has been tracked over time by the former owner of the property and DEC.

The TBA also focused on a buried heating-fuel distribution system that has been a concern. Helping to confirm the presence or absence of fuel releases from the old lines, and estimating the cost of any needed remediation, are integral to project negotiations. The costs associated with the excavation and removal of petroleum-contaminated soil would directly affect the development costs. With multiple parties involved, a time-critical

development plan, and sometimes conflicting financial objectives, timely environmental information can be critical to a successful property transaction. The TBA results indicated that subsurface contamination was not extensive and did not exceed cleanup levels in the areas investigated; thus, expensive environmental cleanup is not expected to be part of the new development.



Abandoned Fairview Manor structures await demolition before new development on this site.

DEC conducted a concurrent area-wide assessment around the Fairview Manor property to further evaluate possible historical releases from former airport operations at Weeks Field. It was important to determine if unknown sources of contamination could affect future development in this area. Through DEC's efforts, three potential sources of contamination were identified, including a former gas station site on the corner of Cowles and Airport Way, an area to the south of Fairview Manor, and another to the north. It is not believed that any of these will affect the Weeks Field Development Group's proposed project.

These two assessment projects marked the first simultaneous brownfield investigation whereby DEC and EPA coordinated workplans and the timing of the investigations to ensure cost efficiencies to both projects. Both agencies provided important information that helps protect our community and facilitates redevelopment of brownfield sites.



Architect's rendering of how future development over current Fairview Manor site may look upon completion. Drawing courtesy of C.B. Bettisworth and Company, Inc.

Environmental investigations can be expensive, and it is not always clear who should pay. Often the *perceived* concerns associated with a site can cloud any vision for a property. Contamination is thought of as a potential "black hole" for expenses with long-term liability. Environmental assessments conducted by DEC and EPA brownfield programs help to clarify costs associated with environmental contamination, and limit liability for potential buyers, developers, and lending institutions. Our communities stand to benefit from the revitalization of brownfields that may otherwise remain blighted. Brownfield programs therefore can play a vital role in any community redevelopment planning.

[John Carnahan](#)
DEC Brownfield Coordinator

Best Alaska Turnout Ever at the Western Brownfield Workshop Portland, Oregon, October 3-5

Sonta Hamilton (YRITWC) says: *"The Western Brownfields Conference was a great opportunity to network with other State and Tribal Response grantees in both Alaska and the lower 48. Alaska was well represented, but let's plan for a bigger turnout next year!"*

DEC's Marti Early attended the Western Brownfield Workshop and some of the key thoughts she came away with are summarized here:

- Speakers from the financial and legal world emphasized the importance of a thorough assessment for obtaining future financing.
- The concept of sustainability using "green" practices is growing in importance in redevelopment efforts around the country.
- Area-wide assessments are a viable use of EPA funding, targeting such sites as dry cleaners, mines, old gas stations, and dumps.
- EPA is reviewing its quality assurance project plan (QAPP) requirements for grants because they are so onerous.
- Some states are developing templates to assist multiple programs in putting together requests for proposals and workplans.
- Many states use volunteers to help identify potential brownfield sites and create inventories.
- Brownfields are: *land recycling, anti-sprawl, a walk through history, and a vision of what's next.*

[Marti Early](#)
DEC Project Coordinator

Workshops and Conferences

The Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council announces YRITWC Hazardous Waste & Emergency Response Training

The Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council's (YRITWC) Back-Haul and Brownfields Programs are excited to announce a Hazardous Waste & Emergency Response Training. This promises to be an exciting hands-on training that will include Spill Response, HazWoper, Emergency Response Planning and much, much more. The training will be alcohol- and drug-free. Seats are limited and preference will be given to YRITWC Inter-Tribal Accord Signatories. If you are interested in attending please contact Jon Waterhouse at jwaterhouse@yritwc.com or (907) 258-3337.

When: January 28-February 5, 2008
Where: Galena

Alaska Forum on the Environment

Save the date for the (<http://akforum.com/agenda.htm>) February 11-15, 2008, in Anchorage, at the Egan Center. This year's agenda is packed with great sessions, inspiring keynote speakers, and fun social gatherings. Come and share, meet friends old

and new, and learn about environmental resources for your community.

When: February 11-15, 2008

Where: Anchorage, at the Egan Center

The Brownfields 2008 National Conference

The [National Brownfields Conference](#) is the largest, most comprehensive conference focused on cleaning up and redeveloping abandoned, underutilized, and potentially contaminated properties in the nation. There is no better deal in the redevelopment marketplace than Brownfields 2008. Why? Because registration is free, and by signing up you gain access to more than 130 educational and learning opportunities, outstanding plenary sessions, 200 exhibitors, scores of networking events, special training sessions, film screenings, book signings, and much, much more.

Individuals and organizations should take advantage of all the educational and networking opportunities that Brownfields 2008 will present. Whether you're a newcomer to the world of economic and environmental redevelopment, or a seasoned professional looking to make new connections and increase your business, Brownfields 2008 offers something for you.

When: May 5-7, 2008

Where: Detroit, Michigan at the Cobo Convention Center

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

Please click [here](#) to sign up for our e-mailing list and ensure you get the latest information on DEC's Reuse and Redevelopment Initiative! Or visit our web page to sign up:
www.dec.state.ak.us/spar/csp/brownfields.htm.

Enter your email address and check *immediate delivery* and submit. An email will be sent to your email address and you simply need to hit reply—that's it! Please forward any information you receive from our list-serve to anyone you think would be interested, and please send us any announcements that may be pertinent, and we will forward them to the brownfield community that has developed across Alaska. Thanks!

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[Sonja Benson](#)
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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!