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EPA Region 9 Brownfields Program Success Stories

Route 66 Creosote Pit · Flagstaff, AZ



Making Room for Redevelopment at Brownfield Site

Project Description

Property Address: 116 West Phoenix Avenue
Flagstaff, AZ 86001

Property Size: 3.4 acres

Former Use: Electric power plant, rail spur, farm supply store, city storage, farmer’s market

Contaminants Found: Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs)

Current Use: Bus transfer station, parking lot

Planned Use: Multi-modal transportation hub, retail and commercial space, open air market, greenspace, Route 66 history museum

Current Owner: City of Flagstaff

Project Partners

- Arizona Department of Environmental Quality
- City of Flagstaff Capital Improvements Division
- Environmental Protection Agency Region 9
- Southside Community Association
- La Plaza Vieja Neighborhood Association
- U.S. EPA

Property History

The city-owned Route 66 Creosote Pit Brownfields site is located between downtown Flagstaff and the Southside Neighborhood and along historic Route 66 and the Flagstaff Urban Trail. The Rio de Flag (flash stream) flows near the Creosote Pit site and through the Southside Neighborhood—resulting in most of this area existing in the 100-year flood plain.

The project site has a long history of industrial uses dating back to 1896 when the site was first used as rail yard—and later as electric power plant between 1906 and 1946. The city removed all remaining structures from the site in 1980 and the site was used for parking, a seasonal farmers market, and by the city for storage. Due to the former industrial uses of the site, The City of Flagstaff, under a grant from the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ), conducted Phase I and Phase II Environment Site Assessments (ESA) between 2006 and 2008. The Phase II confirmed elevated levels of polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons in the soil as a result of the creosote



Brownfields redevelopment plan for the Creosote Pit site

Highlights

- Environmental cleanup allows the Flood Control Project to move forward, taking the Creosote Pit site and Southside Neighborhood out of the flood plain and paving the way for needed redevelopment to proceed
- Green remediation strategy minimized the environmental footprint of the cleanup by reducing:
 - Total miles driven by project haul trucks from 7360 to 1150 miles or 84 percent
 - Low sulfur diesel fuel consumption by 1035 gallons
 - Greenhouse gas emissions by more than 20,000 lbs of carbon dioxide equivalents
 - Fresh water use by 10,000 gallons
 - Use of raw materials by using 869 tons of recycled soil for backfill
- Current use as a bus transfer station provides an immediate community benefit—and serves to test-drive the viability of the long-term redevelopment objectives for the former Creosote Pit site

pit operated by both the railroad and the power plant for dipping and treating wood materials such as railroad ties and electrical poles. Contamination was limited to a 0.02-acre area surrounding the creosote pit—allowing the Northern Arizona Intergovernmental Public Transportation Authority downtown transfer station to be temporarily located on a portion of the site.

Drivers for Redevelopment

The Creosote Pit project site and most of the Southside Neighborhood—one of the oldest neighborhoods in Flagstaff—are located within the Federal Emergency Management Administration’s (FEMA) 100-year Flood Plain. As a result, stringent building and insurance requirements preclude redevelopment and new development

in this area. To help move the redevelopment process along, the city and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers designed a multi-year project to remove the area from the 100-year flood plain. However, during the realignment process, it was discovered that the Creosote Pit is in the way of the project.

The project site's prime downtown location, ties to historic and major transportation systems, and current use as a bus transfer station, led to the development of a community-driven Redevelopment Plan that calls for the mixed reuse of the Creosote Pit site as a multi-modal transportation hub, urban trails and greenspace, retail and commercial space including an open air retail market and a Route 66 history museum. The old Route still bisects Flagstaff and runs through the historic downtown. The city offers a walking tour describing the history and location of many of the old buildings in downtown Flagstaff.

However, until the contamination was removed from the site, the Redevelopment Plan and Flood Control Project could not move forward. In 2009, the city received a \$126,900 Brownfields Cleanup grant from EPA to clean up the Creosote Pit site, allowing both the Flood Control Project and Redevelopment Plan to move forward and allow much needed redevelopment and future development.

Project Results

In September 2010, cleanup of the 0.02 -acre Creosote Pit site kicked off with an event attended by the Mayor, City Manager and staff from various city departments. Representatives from EPA Region 9 filmed the event; the film showcases the history of the property, the Rio de Flag Flood Control Project, the cleanup and Redevelopment Plan, and ties in the importance of the site's proximity to Route 66.

During the cleanup, green remediation elements were employed to reduce air emissions and energy use and conserve natural resources such as reducing truck and equipment idle, using only reclaimed water, and combining activity schedules—excavated soil after additional sampling was hauled offsite for proper disposal while these same trucks were cleaned and returned to the site with a load of backfill.

Cleanup of the Creosote Pit site was completed in November 2010 and resulted in the removal of 833 tons of contaminated soil along with wood, concrete, brick, old piping and other material. A No Further Action letter was issued through the ADEQ Voluntary Remediation Program



Interim reuse of a portion of the Creosote Pit site for the Northern Arizona Intergovernmental Public Transportation Authority downtown bus transfer station

Funding Information

\$89,963	PADEQ Phase I and II funding
\$35,000	City of Flagstaff and in-kind labor from fall 2006 to February 2011
\$126,900	EPA Brownfields Cleanup grant (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding)

Project Timeline

2006-2008	Phase I and Phase II ESAs conducted by City of Flagstaff, (ADEQ grant)
2009	EPA Brownfields Cleanup grant Awarded to the City of Flagstaff
2009-2010	Development of the West Phoenix Avenue Brownfield Redevelopment Plan
09/2010	Cleanup started by the city with oversight from ADEQ
11/2010	Cleanup completed by the city with oversight from ADEQ
02/2011	NFA letter issued by ADEQ

in February 2011; allowing the Rio de Flag Flood Control Project and Redevelopment Plan to move forward.

Two phases of the Rio de Flag Flood Control Project have been completed including the Clay Avenue Detention Basin and the Butler Tunnel underpass. Additional funding will be necessary to allow more phases of the project to be completed including the Creosote Pit site and Southside Neighborhood realignment. The city will put the Redevelopment Plan out for bid when the Rio de Flag Flood Control Project is completed at the site.

For additional information, please contact:

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