

EPA And Wildlife Habitat Council Partner To Foster Reuse Of Abandoned Gas Stations For Parks, Wildlife Habitat, And Green Space

Fact Sheet Series: Partnerships

The Wildlife Habitat Council and EPA foster partnerships among govern- ments, industry, and communities to facilitate the ecological reuse of old gas station sites.

With an estimated 95,000 acres of Brownfields available for redevelopment, by building new projects on old Brownfields sites, there is the potential to save almost half a million acres of green space . . . as large as Yosemite National Park, or twice the size of Chicago.

--Cliff Rothenstein, Director, EPA Office of Underground Storage Tanks

Cleaning up and redeveloping old abandoned gas stations for parks, wildlife habitat, and green space preserves pristine land elsewhere. A 2001 George Washington University study found that for every acre of brownfields that is reused, an average of 4.5 acres of green space is saved. The ecological reuse of petroleum-contaminated brownfields, including old gas station sites, can amplify the environmental value of a site beyond that of other types of reuse because it increases or improves habitat for plants and animals as well as protects human health. An "ecological enhancement" modifies a site to increase/improve habitat for plants and animals while protecting human health and the environment; it can include natural remediation technologies and/or also represent an end use that restores/increases the ecological value of the land. A remedial plan that embraces these concepts can contribute greatly to the protection of human health and the environment.

The Wildlife Habitat Council has entered into a cooperative agreement with EPA's Office of Underground Storage Tanks (OUST) to help maximize the ecological benefits of reusing petroleum brownfields. One goal of the agreement is to demonstrate how federal, state, and local governments, industry, and community groups can use ecological enhancements to facilitate the restoration of petroleum brownfields for a variety of uses, including wildlife habitat. Under the agreement, the Wildlife Habitat Council will demonstrate the use of the latest technologies for applying ecological enhancements to site remediation. Specific objectives for the partnership include:

- Achieving greater regulatory flexibility and support for ecological enhancements;
- Developing a strategy for obtaining constructive and meaningful stakeholder involvement;
- Ensuring sound scientific and technical support for ecological enhancement practices; and

The **Wildlife Habitat Council (WHC)** works to demonstrate the methods and means that state and local governments, industry, and community groups can use ecological enhancements to increase the rate at which contaminated lands, both private and public (state, tribal, local), can be restored for a variety of reuses, including wildlife habitat enhancement as part of restoration designs. WHC aims to identify and highlight potential pilot sites and success stories to its members and contacts, and encourages stakeholders to submit information on success stories for outreach purposes. Interested individuals can learn more about WHC's efforts on its webpage at www.wildlifehc.org.

- Promoting the value of ecological enhancements through a broad range of communication tools.

Currently, the Wildlife Habitat Council works with the EPA Office of Under-

ground Storage Tanks to develop opportunities for the inclusion of ecological enhancements in end-use plans for petroleum-contaminated sites similar to the projects described below.

Chicago Turns Old Gas Station into a Pocket Park



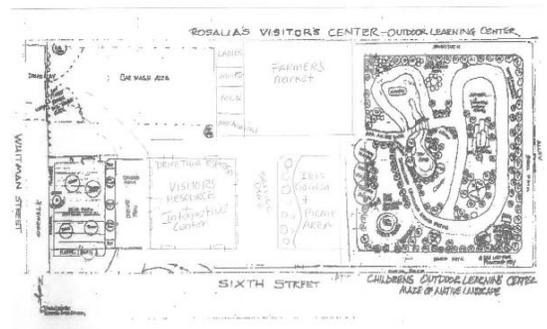
After tank removal and cleanup, the West Ogden Pocket Park adds green space to an urban Chicago neighborhood.



The small West Ogden Pocket Park site was a service station as early as 1919. Before cleanup and redevelopment, the site contained a derelict building used for illegal dumping and 11 underground storage tanks ranging in size from 600 to 10,000 gallons. These tanks contained gasoline, diesel, heating oil, and used oil. Cooperation among the Chicago departments of Buildings, Environment, and Transportation led to tank removal, site remediation, and restoration. In the summer of 2001, the West Ogden Pocket Park opened and added much needed green space to the surrounding neighborhood.

Rosalia Transforms Old Gas Station Into a Regional Attraction

The Old Jensen Texaco Station in Rosalia, Washington, was built in 1923. Rosalia is a town of about 600 people whose leaders and citizens were determined to clean up the abandoned gas station site and restore the station building. Funding from the Washington Department of Ecology, Whitman County, EPA, and private donors enabled the town to remove five underground storage tanks and petroleum contamination at the site, restore the old station, and create habitat for native species. The Wildlife Habitat Council is presently assisting in the development of a landscape plan designed to restore designated areas of the site to native habitat. Rosalia now has an attractive visitor's center that provides information about Rosalia and rural Whitman County and serves as the interpretive center for the nearby Steptoe Battlefield, a state park listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Work on the Jensen Memorial Rose Garden and other attractions continues.



Reuse plans for Rosalia include native landscaping and an outdoor learning center.

New Regional Office in Hammond Facilitates Ecological Reuse



The four phases of redevelopment of the Hohman tank site in Hammond.

The Northwest Indiana office of the Wildlife Habitat Council in Hammond fosters the cooperation of companies, government agencies, conservation groups, and the public in the cleanup of contaminated properties and encourages the integration of ecological enhancements in restoration efforts. The office seeks local and regional models that demonstrate the value of using voluntary wildlife habitat enhancements to increase the pace of site remediation and land restoration and reuse. The restoration of a former gas station site in Hammond began when neighbors decided to create a pocket park on this blighted property. A partnership emerged of the Hammond Department of Environmental Management, Hammond Redevelopment Commission, Urban Enterprise Association of Hammond, Pulaski Park Neighborhood Association, Grand Calumet River Task Force, and the Wildlife Habitat Council. Community members became leaders in the decision making process for the removal and redevelopment of this site located on the corner of Hohman Avenue and

Huehn Street. The design, planning, and fundraising process is underway to restore the site as a pocket park.

Next door to Hammond in Gary, Indiana, the city received additional Brownfields grant funding from EPA for the cleanup of a former gas station located at 25th and Chase streets. This site will become part of a new park and the Gary Park District headquarters. The Gary Department of Environmental Affairs is preparing a Corrective Action Plan for tank removal and soil and groundwater cleanup, which will be accompanied by the implementation of a community outreach and involvement plan. The Department is facilitating a Brownfields Community Advisory Work Group to act in an advisory capacity for brownfields assessment, cleanup, and community outreach projects in the city. The Work Group is also considering the development of the first groundwater use ordinance for the city as a part of this project.

Prior to its cooperative agreement with OUST, the Wildlife Habitat Council worked with several petroleum brownfields sites to encourage the incorporation of ecological enhancements into restoration goals. The organization's Land Restoration program presents several success stories at www.wildlifehc.org/brownfield_restoration; these stories illustrate how ecological enhancements have been used successfully at petroleum-contaminated sites as remediation techniques, integral components of remediation design, and end-uses that provide wildlife habitat.

For more information on ecological enhancements and successful brownfields redevelopment, see:

- Wildlife Habitat Council www.wildlifehc.org
- EPA Brownfields Success Stories www.epa.gov/brownfields/success.htm
- George Washington University Report on Brownfields Redevelopment www.gwu.edu/~eem/Brownfields/project_report/report.htm
- Ecological Enhancement Technical Information www.wildlifehc.org/brownfield_restoration/Technical_Info.cfm
- Ecological Enhancement Success Story - Rosalia, Washington Visitors' Resource Center www.rosaliavic.org/

November 2004