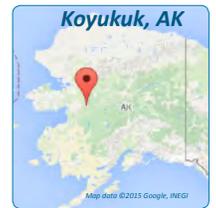


Koyukuk Landfill Transformation: Burn unit significantly reduces trash and cleans up community



Indian Environmental General Assistance Program Success Story



Before Koyukuk began using a burn unit at their self-haul landfill, trash spilled into the road, animals scattered garbage, open burning created air pollution, plastic bags hung in trees, and the salvage area was piled full of materials with little room to walk or drive.



Talking with other tribes and attending conferences like the Alaska Tribal Conference on Environmental Management and the Alaska Forum on the Environment convinced the tribe's environmental staff that a burn unit could improve conditions.

Burn units are used to reduce the volume of household trash disposed of in rural landfills by burning it daily in a metal container designed for hot combustion that generates less air pollution and waste than from open burning.

The city of Koyukuk is responsible for maintaining the landfill. The tribe provided information to the city, and explained how a burn unit could help the landfill cut down on household waste.

The tribe offered to purchase the burn unit for the city using their GAP funds, and through a memorandum of understanding outlined roles and responsibilities for the two governing bodies to co-manage the landfill (until the city could take over).

**'If not for the GAP grant, we
would be surrounded by trash'**

– April Williams, Environmental Assistant

In 2012, Koyukuk Native Village purchased a burn unit and hired an operator who received training to run it correctly. The operator learned to separate non-burnable items that could be recycled, such as electronics and prepare them for shipping and disposal.

The tribe educates residents about what should— and *shouldn't* — go in the burn unit. Items that don't get burned go to the salvage area. The city donated a used trailer where residents can put their trash. In 2015, the city also purchased heavy equipment to bury non-burnable, non-recyclable items.

April Williams, the Environmental Assistant for Koyukuk Native Village loves having the burn unit because she no longer feels her health is in jeopardy when she goes to the landfill.

Koyukuk Native Village's Environmental Technician Hazel Lolnitz said, "Good teamwork accomplished something for the community. I am happy the burn unit eliminated some health hazards for elders and children."



Photos courtesy of April Williams

⇒ Continued



Burn unit installation

She says there's no smoke in the community, birds no longer scatter trash, and there's no garbage outside the fence.

Koyukuk Native Village has been a GAP grant recipient since 1999. "If not for the GAP grant, we would be surrounded by trash," says April Williams.

For those thinking of taking on a similar project, she offers, "Don't get discouraged if you get turned down (for funding) the first time. Just keep trying. Having a burn unit on our landfill has made it so much healthier and sanitary for our community."

Partners & Support

City of Koyukuk • collaboration in landfill maintenance and improvements

<http://go.usa.gov/cBe4V>

Alaska Forum on the Environment • Rural Alaska Landfill Operator Training

<http://bit.ly/1PZFYSG>

Tanana Chiefs Conference • burn unit operator training and technical assistance

<https://www.tananachiefs.org/>

Tok Welding and Fabrication • burn unit purchase and technical assistance

<http://www.alaskanstoves.com/>

Yukon/Koyukuk Environmental Consortia • information sharing with neighboring tribes

Community Profile: Koyukuk

Population: 92

Culture: Traditional Koyukon Athabascan village.

Location: The village is located at the confluence of the Yukon and Koyukuk Rivers.

Transportation: The state-owned, gravel runway is lighted and provides for year-round transportation. The river is heavily traveled when ice-free, from mid-May through mid-October. Cargo is delivered by barge about four times in the summer. Residents use local trails and winter trails to travel to Galena and Nulato. Snow machines, ATVs, and riverboats are used for local transportation.

Source: State of Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development Community Database

EPA Region 10's Commitment to Federally Recognized Tribes

EPA Region 10 is committed to helping tribes strengthen their abilities to manage environmental programs in Indian country, and to ensure that tribes have a voice in decisions that affect their land, air and water. Region 10 serves 271 federally recognized tribes in Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. The goal of the EPA IGAP grant program is to assist tribes and intertribal consortia in developing the capacity to manage their own environmental protection programs, and to develop and implement solid and hazardous waste programs in accordance with individual tribal needs and applicable federal laws and regulations.

<http://www2.epa.gov/tribal/region-10-tribal-program>

<http://www2.epa.gov/tribal/indian-environmental-general-assistance-program-gap>

For More Information

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