Brownfields

Success Story

Making Room for New Homes

Spirit Lake Tribe, North Dakota

Between 2006 and 2019, the Spirit Lake Tribe used EPA Brownfields funding to complete an impressive 41 cleanups throughout their tribal lands. The majority of the cleanups have occurred on abandoned houses that were contaminated with asbestos and lead. Housing is a critical need for the Tribe, and these cleanups have removed substandard structures so that new and safe homes can be built in their place.

Brownfields funding has also helped remove asbestos materials from a Head Start building prior to its renovation. At another site, vermiculite asbestos present in the building debris of a former post office posed a health risk to people and nearby wetlands. The asbestos, building debris, and contaminated soils have been removed, and the area is now natural open space adjacent to existing recreational fields.

Keys to Success

The presence of brownfields advocates within the Tribal government is a major factor. Also, they have refined a process that combines EPA grant types within an annual cycle, which has maximized the number of cleanups.

The process begins by completing a brief application for a no-cost Targeted Brownfields Assessment (TBA). The best time to do this is in the spring. During the summer, environmental specialists contracted by EPA perform the assessments which identify the presence and locations of contaminants and estimate the costs of removing them.

With information gained from the TBAs, the Tribe then completes planning and budgeting for cleanups in the summer and fall. Typically, they use funds from their CERCLA 128(a) Brownfields Tribal Response Program grant to pay for the cleanups.

In 2017, when TBA results indicated that the Tribal Response Program grant funding would not be enough to cover cleanup costs, the Tribe applied for and received a $200,000 competitive Brownfield grant to clean nine houses in Sheyenne, North Dakota. With that boost, the Tribe was also able to target $30,000 of Tribal Response funding to clean three houses in other parts of the reservation.

"The local community is very happy with the recent cleanups. We have eliminated major hazards and the properties can be safely reused."
—Arthur Carmona, Spirit Lake Environmental Protection Administration

EPA Grant Recipient:
Spirit Lake Tribe, North Dakota

Technical Assistance Tool:
EPA Targeted Brownfield Assessment

EPA Grants Used:

- Annual CERCLA 128(a) Tribal Response Funding
- Brownfield Cleanup Grant

For more information, contact:
Ted Lanzano at (303) 312-6596
Lanzano.Ted@epa.gov

A house contaminated by hazardous materials, before and after cleanup.

United States Environmental Protection Agency

EPA 560F20010 March 2020