



SUSTAINABLE LANDS DEPARTMENT

Brownfield Tribal Response Program

Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council

Frequently Asked Questions

GENERAL BROWNFIELDS INFORMATION:

What is a brownfield?

Brownfields are contaminated sites which could be targeted for cleanup and redevelopment. According to the EPA, a 'brownfields site' is defined as real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant or contaminant.

I've only heard of brownfields existing in urban areas, how does it apply to rural Alaska?

While brownfields are often thought of as a by-product of urban industries, they are also a serious problem in rural Alaska. Alaska has a known history of haphazard development which has led to contamination in rural communities. This includes military sites, mining, and various other entities. While the responsible parties are often long gone, the remnants of their presence remains.

What are the most common types of contamination in the Watershed?

- Old or illegal dumps
- Petroleum spills
- Abandoned or idle structures with lead paint, asbestos or other hazardous materials
- Old fuel storage areas or former gas stations
- Mine-scarred lands

What are some ideas for reuse?

- Park space/recreation area
- Transfer site
- Rehabilitated subsistence area
- Boat launch
- Clinic
- Recycling center
- Small business
- Community garden

How many Tribes participate and how can new Tribes join?

Currently there are 40 Tribes participating in the Brownfields Tribal Response Program. If your Tribe would like to join, please contact Sonta (shamilton@yritwc.org) or Rose (rhewitt@yritwc.org).

SUSTAINABLE LANDS DEPARTMENT INFORMATION:

Why and how did this department form?

When tribal leaders organized the YRITWC in 1997, they voiced concern over the possible impact of contaminated areas on the Watershed. The Sustainable Lands Department was created to address these concerns. The Department evolved from several past initiatives that focused on contaminants mapping and brownfields. In 2005, YRITWC received funding from the Lannan Foundation to develop an inventory of contaminated sites and risks to communities. This effort was reinforced with an EPA State and Tribal Response Program grant that enabled the YRITWC to form a Brownfields Tribal Response Program.

How many contaminated sites exist in the Watershed?

We have documented 229 sites using GPS, digital camera and our survey guide.

What services do we provide to Tribes?

- Inventory potential brownfield sites
- Maintain a publicly-accessible watershed-wide record of contaminated sites
- Foster public participation in planning, clean-up and reuse
- Help obtain environmental assessments
- Provide relevant trainings
- Identify available resources to assist in brownfields clean-up and reuse