

Successful DoD – Tribal Partnership



YAVAPAI PRESCOTT INDIAN TRIBE: FT. WHIPPLE BARRACKS LANDFILL

The Department of Defense (DoD) first partnered with the Yavapai Prescott Indian Tribe through the Native American Lands Environmental Mitigation Program (NALEMP) in 2003, when the Tribe was awarded its first Cooperative Agreement (CA) to address impacts associated with the Ft. Whipple Barracks Landfill. When just under 1,500 acres of the former Ft. Whipple land was transferred to the Department of the Interior (DOI) in trust for the Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribe in 1935, the Ft. Whipple Barracks Landfill was included in the transfer.

The landfill had been used by the U.S. Army for disposal of miscellaneous waste and construction debris from the 1920s up until the mid-1970s. The Tribe was concerned about asbestos-containing materials (ACM) from construction debris disposed in the landfill. The position of the landfill next to Granite Creek, a perennial stream that crosses the entire reservation, led the Tribe to express concern about potential contaminant migration to surface and groundwater. The tribe also restricted livestock grazing activities at this site.



Asbestos-contaminated soil stockpiled for disposal. YPIT 2011.

With guidance from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Los Angeles District (USACE, LA), NALEMP work began in 2003 with the development of the Strategic Project Implementation Plan (SPIP), a document which directs the Tribe's work addressing former military impacts to tribal lands from the landfill. A further characterization of the site resulted in findings of asbestos containing material in former roofing shingles disposed of randomly and still present in the landfill. The Tribe conducted soil and groundwater sampling at the landfill site to determine the full extent of the approximately two-acre landfill and asbestos contamination, and also collected samples of plants to determine if contaminants were present in plant tissues. No contaminants, other than asbestos, were found in any of the samples.

Funding provided to the Tribe under NALEMP in 2005, and again in 2009, allowed the Tribe to complete an environmental assessment (EA) to satisfy National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements, as well as plan and conduct archeological data recovery from the landfill. Archeologists from contractor Western Cultural Resource Management found mostly household and institutional trash artifacts, including liquor bottles, ketchup bottles, and table settings. Looting and intrusion by "treasure hunters" at the site led the Tribe to post a security guard for overnight and weekend hours. Cleanup of the landfill involved removal and disposal of 2,457 tons of asbestos-contaminated soil, as well as 3,959 tons of non-ACM soil. Contaminated soil was disposed of at a hazardous materials facility, while the rest was taken to the municipal landfill.



Graded and ready for hydroseeding. YPIT 2011.

The Tribe's final CA provided funding to remove remaining landfill debris, regrade, and seed the area with native grasses and plants, including ones used in cultural ceremonies. Confident that public health and the environment have been protected, the Tribe is pleased that an important portion of the reservation has been returned to its natural state. The Tribe maintains an interest in using this area for willow gathering for baskets and a future cultural museum.