

National Auto Salvage

PUB-RR-830

March, 2009

National Auto Salvage

1001 South 2nd Avenue SW
Onalaska, WI
La Crosse County

2.5 Acres

Location: The property lies near a major highway in Onalaska, within the floodplain of the Mississippi River.

A partnership between the DNR, EPA and city of Onalaska helped remove the contaminated remains of an auto salvage yard from a flood-prone area.

History

In 1952, cars were big, bold and very heavy; and when they broke down in Onalaska some were taken to the brand new National Auto Wrecking salvage yard. From that time on, cars were crushed, parts were salvaged and petroleum tanks were destroyed on this strip of land between Highway 35 and the Mississippi River.

For more than 40 years, the auto wrecker handled metals, lead, gas, oil and dangerous chemicals. When the business closed in 1994, a representative from the Remediation and Redevelopment (RR) Program went to inspect the site. The inspector found broken pieces of batteries, transformer insulators, burned electrical wires, and a leaking underground storage tank.

After being approached by RR staff, the estate of the former owner and operator was obligated to spend \$170,000 to determine the scope of contamination at the site, and fencing was placed around former the salvage yard. When the owner's estate filed for bankruptcy, the RR Program and EPA Region 5 Superfund Program created a partnership to form a cleanup plan for the property.

Investigation and Cleanup

With the site investigation partially complete, RR staff worked with the EPA to address serious contamination issues at the former auto salvage yard.

EPA then put crews to work: a burn shed and electrical shed were demolished; one underground storage tank and two above-ground storage tanks were removed; more than a dozen barrels



Decades of auto salvage waste piled up on the Onalaska property (photo courtesy DNR).



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of gas and diesel were hauled away; and 437 tons of contaminated debris were taken off-site. In addition, nearly 11,000 tons of contaminated soil was treated and moved to a nearby landfill, while another 2,800 tons of untreated soil was also removed.

Redevelopment

The hard work of redevelopment paid off for the city of Onalaska. Health hazards were minimized on the property and new companies moved in. Four businesses took root on the property, including heating and cooling, windows and siding, and flooring companies.

The companies have invested an estimated \$4 - \$5 million on the property.

Financial, Liability, Technical Assistance

The RR Program partnered with the EPA and the city of Onalaska to ensure the success of this effort.

The RR Program contributed \$44,700 in state funded response monies for the cleanup effort, and EPA provided \$800,000 in federal funds.

Agency staff also issued an off-site exemption letter to a neighboring property to ease any liability concerns regarding contamination from the salvage yard migrating to that property.

Contacts

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Four businesses now operate at the site of the former auto wrecker (photo courtesy city of Onalaska).

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