128th Air Refueling Wing
1919 E. Grange Ave.
Milwaukee, WI
Milwaukee County
20 Acres
Location: General Mitchell International Airport

Local Air National Guard personnel worked with the DNR to clean up contamination and expand refueling operations at their Milwaukee base.

History
Since 1947, men and women have served the state of Wisconsin as members of the Wisconsin Air National Guard. For nearly 50 of those years, Guard members fulfilled their missions as part of the 128th Air Refueling Wing. Based in Milwaukee, this wing is dedicated to keeping U.S. military aircraft refueled and flying all across the globe. The Wisconsin Air National Guard has supported many important military operations during its existence, including recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

When the 128th is not flying refueling missions, their massive KC-135 aircraft which sit at their home base at General Mitchell International Airport. Over the decades, hundreds of thousands of gallons of jet fuel passed through the base, and some times during the refueling process this fuel has spilled on and around the concrete parking area (or “apron”) where the aircraft are serviced.

Investigation and Cleanup
Contaminated soil became an issue when the Refueling Wing was looking to expand the apron to accommodate additional tankers.

Examinations of the soil on portions of the 128th’s property revealed high levels of Petroleum contamination, including polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), petroleum
volatile organic chemicals (PVOCs) and diesel range organics (DROs). Soil contamination posed a public health threat; however, the contamination fortunately did not pose a risk to groundwater.

Since no major development was planned for the site and there appeared to be minimal risk to groundwater, the DNR allowed the soil to remain under the protective layer created by the base’s concrete apron.

**Redevelopment**

With approval from the DNR’s Remediation and Redevelopment (RR) Program, the concrete apron was resurfaced and extended. Not only did this protect Air Guard personnel from potential exposure, it also gave the 128th a larger surface to expand the scope of their operations.

**Financial, Liability, Technical Assistance**

The RR Program provided oversight and monitored completion of the remediation project. Upon satisfactory completion, the Air National Guard was issued a closure letter, indicating no further remediation was necessary. In addition, a cap maintenance plan was established to ensure that the concrete apron covering the soil remained intact, preventing potential future exposure to contaminated soil.

**Contacts**

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DNR staff assisted the Wisconsin Air National Guard in meeting environmental regulations while expanding the concrete apron where the aircraft are parked (photo courtesy Wisconsin Air National Guard).