

# Neillsville Foundry

PUB-RR-833

February, 2009

## Neillsville Foundry

1200 East 15th Street  
Neillsville, WI  
Clark County

40 Acres

**Location: A wooded area in the central Wisconsin town of Neillsville.**

**A central Wisconsin town goes from fire to ice, after turning a contaminated former foundry site into a hockey rink for players of all ages.**

### History

The Neillsville Foundry was constructed in 1969, when a group of local investors conceived and created the business under the name O'Neill Industries. They leased the building to an outside operator who managed the daily operations of the foundry, producing iron castings.

While the foundry was running, the operator improperly disposed of foundry sand, a by-product of the casting process, by dumping the waste over a three acre area of the site. Remediation and Redevelopment (RR) Program staff worked continually for nearly 20 years to enforce laws mandating the sand be properly managed. Eventually, the Department of Justice was brought in to assist enforcement, resulting in a cash payment by the operator of \$323,518.69.

The foundry remained an important employer in Neillsville until 1998, when the operator shut it down. It was reopened shortly thereafter but closed in the midst of the economic downturn of 2001. The foundry's newest operator left in an abrupt fashion; essentially shutting down and walking away.

Two years later, RR Program project managers toured the now quiet factory to assess contamination concerns. What they found was a building frozen in time. Since the foundry had been literally abandoned following the shut down, everything was left just as it was on that final day, the stock room was still fully supplied and that day's newspaper lay covered in dust, alongside a half-drunk soda.

Deciding there was little future in the foundry, the city moved to acquire the building portion of the property for redevelopment.



*Areas of gray mark the spots where foundry sand was dumped in Neillsville (photo courtesy DNR).*



Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources  
Remediation and Redevelopment Program

PO Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707  
<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/aw/rr>





*Kids have hockey practice at the site of the former Neillsville Foundry (photo courtesy DNR).*

### **Investigation and Cleanup**

The city of Neillsville took a proactive approach to cleanup by working with RR staff to remediate the property.

To begin, the property's former owners salvaged any usable equipment and supplies. Once the building was mostly cleared out, the city demolished the foundry.

Meanwhile, RR staff used state funds to pay for other cleanup work to minimize the health risk at the property. The site investigation revealed elevated levels of arsenic in the foundry sand, as well as volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and chlorinated VOCs in the groundwater.

The state-funded response included removal of twenty 55-gallon drums filled with capacitors, as well as other containers of assorted chemicals and oils, from the foundry building. The property was re-graded where foundry sand had been spread out, and a cap consisting of two feet of native, low-permeability fill and six inches of topsoil was constructed over the waste.

### **Redevelopment**

Cleanup of the former foundry removed a threat to human health, not only from the capping of arsenic contaminated soil, but from removal of the dilapidated building.

In stark contrast to the fire and smoke of the foundry, the property is now home to an outdoor ice hockey rink. Local donors contributed enough money to build an adjacent locker room building for players to gear-up before and after games. The rink hosts learn-to-skate classes and hockey clinics for up to 40 students. The Neillsville Hockey Association has now broadened its scope and been renamed the Youth Hockey Association of Clark County, currently serving five communities. The Association is raising funds to enclose the ice rink.

### **Financial, Liability, Technical Assistance**

Program staff worked with representatives of O'Neill Industries, the city of Neillsville, Clark County Development Corporation, Ayres Associates consultants and others to make the project a reality.

Cleanup for the entire project came at a cost of \$503,771. Much of the cost was covered by the aforementioned settlement with the former operator, a \$100,000 Brownfield Site Assessment Grant from the DNR, with the \$40,000 difference coming from state funded response.

A local construction company donated the 1,750 square-foot building adjacent to the rink, valued at \$85,000.

### **Contacts**

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