Celebrating Success: Iron Horse Park Billerica, Massachusetts

EPA

Superfund Redevelopment Initiative

Regrading of Shaffer Landfill's steep slopes during site cleanup activities. (Source: EPA)

"Repurposing these sites for renewable energy projects will provide clean energy for New England communities, help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, support economic development opportunities and help generate local jobs."

Mathy Stanislaus, Assistant Administrator for EPA's Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response

Construction of the cap over the Shaffer Landfill portion of the Site. (Source: EPA)

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The completed solar development over Shaffer Landfill. (Source: UGT)

Reuse at the Iron Horse Park Superfund site (the Site) reinforces community-driven efforts in New England to move toward renewable energy sources. The Shaffer Landfill portion of the Site is now home to a 6-megawatt solar electricity plant.

The Site, a 553-acre industrial complex, hosted a variety of manufacturing and rail yard maintenance activities since 1913. Open storage areas, several landfills and wastewater lagoons supported former industrial operations. However, investigations found operations had contaminated soil, groundwater and surface water. After conducting a removal action to address immediate risks to the surrounding community, EPA added the Site to the Superfund program's National Priorities List in 1984. Cleanup activities included removal of contaminated soil, filling areas with clean soil, and closing and capping landfills. The cleanup also focused on restoring the abundant wetlands on site and creating new wetland habitats. In addition, several on-site businesses continued to operate throughout the cleanup process.

In recent years, site stakeholders focused new reuse efforts on the 100-acre Shaffer Landfill portion of the Site. Under EPA oversight, a group of responsible parties constructed a cap over the closed landfill. In 2012, Urban Green Technologies LLC (UGT) began conducting extensive analyses of the area in anticipation of a solar renewable energy project. UGT worked with EPA to develop a layout that would not only maximize the project's size, but also address the engineering challenges of installing solar panels on the landfill's steep slopes while ensuring the cap remained intact. In order for the project to be approved, EPA determined that no substantial modification to the landfill would be required for the solar installation, and the State issued a permit for its construction and operation. Working with the responsible parties, the project received strong support from the Town of Billerica, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and National Grid. UGT began construction of the 25-acre solar array in early 2014.

The combined efforts of all the Site's stakeholders made the renewable energy project possible. UGT demonstrated its dedication to the project through the signing of a payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) agreement. Coordinated with EPA and the State, the PILOT agreement guarantees the Town of Billerica will receive payment in lieu of taxes for the next 25 years. In August 2014, EPA, UGT and the Town of Billerica held a ceremony marking the project's completion. The 20,000 panels will generate about six megawatts of electricity, resulting in significant long-term energy cost savings for the Town. In November 2014, EPA celebrated the renewable energy reuse accomplishments at the Site with Region 1's Excellence in Site Reuse Award recognizing those who have created extraordinary results in revitalizing and reusing formerly contaminated Superfund sites.

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