

# RETURN TO USE INITIATIVE

## 2012 Demonstration Project

### CHEMICAL COMMODITIES, INC.: Olathe, Kansas

**THE SITE:** The 1.5-acre Chemical Commodities, Inc. (CCI) Superfund site (the Site) is located in a mixed commercial, industrial and residential area in Olathe, Kansas. From 1951 until 1989, CCI operated a facility that recycled, stored, repackaged and distributed various chemicals. Poor housekeeping, material handling practices and chemical recycling activities resulted in spills and leaks of hazardous chemicals onto the ground at the Site. Following numerous complaints from the local community, the EPA, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) and the Site's potentially responsible party (PRP) group conducted site investigations and identified soil and ground water contamination, including heavy metals, volatile and semi-volatile organic compounds (VOCs and SVOCs), polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), polyaromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and pesticides.

Between 1989 and 1991, the EPA completed several early removal actions, including disposal of chemicals and contaminated soil, demolition of an on-site facility and installation of a ground water treatment system. The EPA placed the site on the National Priorities List (NPL) in 1994. Beginning in 1998, the EPA worked with the PRP group to conduct additional cleanup activities at the Site. From 2000 until 2002, indoor air sampling in residential homes near the Site identified increasing contaminant levels. Between 2003 and 2007, the EPA installed ventilation systems in 45 homes to address indoor air impacts.

The EPA selected the Site's final remedy in 2005. Cleanup activities, completed in 2012, included excavation of contaminated soil, backfilling, demolition of remaining structures, construction of a perimeter trench to intercept and treat ground water, treatment of off-site contaminated ground water, monitoring, institutional controls and maintenance of residential ventilation systems. The PRP group operated the ground water treatment system as well as the interceptor trench, both of which permanently closed in 2005.



**PICTURED:** Barrels of chemicals and debris at the Site in the 1970s, prior to cleanup. (source: The EPA)

**BARRIER:** Numerous PRPs and zoning of the Site property created obstacles for efficient cleanup and reuse of the Site.

**SOLUTION:** One of the Site's PRPs took the lead on site cleanup, working closely with the EPA, KDHE and the CCI Concerned Citizen's Group, Inc. Cleanup of the Site, completed ahead of schedule and under-budget, has allowed for the community to begin planning for the Site's ecological, education and recreational reuse.



**PICTURED:** Over 100 volunteers helped plant the new pollinator habitat garden in September 2012. (source: The EPA)

**BARRIER:** An industrial property that caused fires and explosions, as well as contamination of soil, ground water and nearby residential properties, was a neighborhood eyesore and posed a risk to area residents.

**AFTER:** The remediated Site, complete with native vegetation and a walking trail, provides habitat for pollinators and local wildlife and serves as an educational and recreational area for the local community.

**THE OPPORTUNITY:** Many nearby residents had witnessed fires and explosions at the Site during the 1960s and 1970s. Residents and other community members formed the CCI Citizens Advisory Group, Inc. in order to voice their concerns and opinions throughout the cleanup process. CCI Citizens Advisory Group, Inc. has worked to change the formerly contaminated Site into a community and ecological asset and has remained active at the Site throughout the cleanup process. Due to the Site's proximity to residential homes, the community voiced concerns regarding privacy, site safety and noise from the nearby railroad. Cleanup of the Site provided the opportunity for the EPA, CCI Citizens Advisory Group, Inc., the PRP group and other local entities to work together to address the community's concerns and requests related to the Site's reuse.

**THE BARRIERS:** Cleanup and redevelopment of the Site would require close coordination and cooperation between the EPA, KDHE, numerous PRPs, the City of Olathe and the local community. The number of PRPs involved with the Site made organized communication difficult and posed a potential obstacle for efficient cleanup of the Site. Additionally, the City of Olathe showed the site property zoned for industrial uses yet the City's master plan supported residential development for the area. Local citizens and nearby residents expressed concern as to whether the Site could support safe reuse and whether reuse would affect the privacy of their homes.

**THE SOLUTION:** One of the PRPs stepped forward to lead the Site's PRP group in cleanup activities. The PRP worked closely with the EPA and the community to expedite the cleanup process. Collaboration resulted in the completion of cleanup ahead of schedule and under-budget. The City rezoned the Site for residential land use with restrictions to allow for open or recreational space. Kansas State University worked with CCI Citizens Advisory Group, Inc. to survey residents' opinions about the Site's future use and to come up with a consensus-based reuse plan. The conceptual plan included trees and vegetation to provide a sound barrier from the railroad tracks and a privacy barrier for nearby residences as well as open space and walking paths for short-term recreational uses. The cleanup of the Site and its reuse as vegetated open space would begin to provide restoration for a neighborhood community affected by decades of fires, industrial processes and contamination from former site activities.

**THE SITE NOW:** Following the development of the conceptual site plan, CCI Citizens Advisory Group, Inc. began working with Monarch Watch and the Pollinator Partnership. The groups prepared plans to establish a walk-through educational habitat at the Site. In September 2012, CCI Citizens Advisory Group, Inc., the EPA, Monarch Watch, the Pollinator Partnership and other site stakeholders planted the garden habitat at the Site. The Site supports a habitat for local wildlife and pollinators, encouraging the health of pollinating animals in North America. The Site provides a beautified landscape for the surrounding neighborhood and offers the local community an educational opportunity to learn the importance of pollination. Features at the Site include pollinator gardens for bees, butterflies and birds; native plants and trees; an area for tagging migrating monarch butterflies; and a walking trail with educational signs and resources. In October 2012, EPA Region 7 presented the Leading Environmentalism and Forwarding Sustainability (L.E.A.F.S.) Award to parties involved in this redevelopment effort for their innovative thinking, sustainable practices and environmental stewardship.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:** Jeff Field, Remedial Project Manager, at (913) 551-7548 or [field.jeff@epa.gov](mailto:field.jeff@epa.gov); or Tonya Howell, Region 7 Superfund Redevelopment Coordinator, at (913) 551-7589 or [howell.tonya@epa.gov](mailto:howell.tonya@epa.gov).