

Brownfields Newsletter

KNIK TRIBE



December 2024



Knik Tribe Brownfields Program: Working Towards a Cleaner and Healthier Community

The Knik Tribe Natural Resources Department entered into an agreement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to establish a new tribal Brownfields Program (also known as a Tribal Response Program) aimed at revitalizing communities by addressing environmental contamination and working towards the redevelopment of impacted properties.

This program will allow the Tribe to participate in contaminated sites management within our service area. The program aims to identify, assess, clean, and repurpose brownfield sites—properties where development has been hindered due to pollution concerns.

The Knik Tribe Brownfields Program will keep you up to date by publishing a quarterly newsletter. This newsletter will contain general brownfields information, information on the Knik Tribe concerns, and will update you on the progress of the sites we work on.

The newsletter will be posted on the brownfields page of the Knik Tribe website and available by email when you sign up for our listserv (coming soon).

We hope you enjoy the newsletter. Please read on to learn more about our program!

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Brownfields 101

Across Alaska, many properties lie vacant or underused due to past industrial activities, contamination, or neglect. These properties are known as brownfields—land that may be polluted with hazardous substances such as petroleum, lead, or heavy metals, making it difficult to redevelop or reuse.

While these sites present significant challenges, they also hold great potential for revitalization, offering opportunities for community development, business growth, and environmental restoration.

What is a Brownfield?

A brownfield is a property where the presence of hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants may hinder its redevelopment or reuse. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), brownfields are “real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant.”

Common examples of brownfield sites in Alaska include abandoned tank farms, old gas stations, former military sites, former dry cleaners, old canneries, and more. These sites may be contaminated with petroleum products, heavy metals, or other toxic chemicals from past operations.

While brownfields can be a serious environmental concern, they can often be cleaned up and transformed into valuable community assets, such as community gathering spaces, parks, solar farms, or can be returned to a natural state for subsistence uses such as hunting and berry picking.

Why Do Brownfields Matter?

Brownfields represent both environmental and economic challenges. Contaminated sites can pose risks to public health, local ecosystems, and the environment. Pollutants can leach into nearby soil and water sources, creating long-term health hazards for communities.

Additionally, many brownfields are located in urban or industrial areas where the redevelopment of vacant properties could significantly improve local quality of life.

However, brownfields also offer exciting opportunities. When properly remediated, these sites can be repurposed for new uses, bringing new life to distressed neighborhoods and boosting local economies. Redeveloping brownfields is more cost-effective than developing new land and can prevent urban sprawl, protecting natural habitats and undeveloped land.

The Brownfield Redevelopment Process

Brownfields redevelopment involves a series of steps to transform contaminated or underused properties into valuable community assets. The process begins with site identification and an assessment to identify environmental hazards. If contamination is confirmed, a cleanup plan is developed to address the issues safely. Once cleaned, the site can be redeveloped for new purposes, benefiting the community.

Throughout this process, community engagement is key to ensuring that redevelopment meets local needs and promotes public health. Successful brownfields redevelopment not only improves the environment but also revitalizes neighborhoods and boosts economic opportunities.

Brownfields Successes in the Mat-Su Valley



PHOTO CREDIT: THE FRONTIERSMAN.
[HTTPS://WWW.FRONTIERSMAN.COM/BUSINESS/TAPPING-A-MARKET-NEW-BREWERY-OPERATION-SETS-SIGHTS-ON-FORMER-MAT-MAID-PLANT-IN-PALMER/ARTICLE_12842DBC-3B57-11E6-A88A-A73BC9774B07.HTML](https://www.frontiersman.com/business/tapping-a-market-new-brewery-operation-sets-sights-on-former-mat-maid-plant-in-palmer/article_12842dbc-3b57-11e6-a88a-a73bc9774b07.html)

Matanuska Maid Parcel A, Palmer

- The Matanuska Maid Blocks were originally developed in 1935 and was part of the original colony corridor
- A dairy operated on the site until 2007
- The City of Palmer was awarded a Targeted Brownfields Assessment from the EPA in 2013 to investigate possible contamination at the site.
- The assessment revealed groundwater and soil contamination at the site
- in 2015, 46 tons of soil were removed and thermally treated
- In 2016, ADEC gave the site a “Cleanup Complete” designation, and the site was ready for reuse
- The site was purchased later that year by the Matanuska Brewing Company
- The new owners renovated the buildings for their needs and opened for business in 2018.



PHOTO CREDIT: THE FRONTIERSMAN.
[HTTPS://WWW.FRONTIERSMAN.COM/BUSINESS/MATANUSKA-BREWING-CUTS-RIBBON-ON-BREWUB-IN-PALMER/ARTICLE_3BB1296E-24BF-11E6-BF20-AF09DD605D70.HTML](https://www.frontiersman.com/business/matanuska-brewing-cuts-ribbon-on-brewpub-in-palmer/article_3bb1296e-24bf-11e6-bf20-af09dd605d70.html)



Reflections Lake, Palmer Hay Flats

- This site was originally owned by the Bureau of Land Management and was leased to Alaska Department of Transportation for use as a gravel mine in support of building the Glenn Highway
- Once accessible from the highway, the site was used for illegal activities such as target shooting and illegal dumping
- This resulted in lead, antimony, and copper contamination in the soils
- In 2003, contaminated soils from the site were removed and transported for disposal
- In 2010, clean fill material was used to cover other areas where shooting occurred to prevent human and wildlife exposure.
- The site was redeveloped as a park by ADNR/ ADF&G
- The site now has established hiking trails, a picnic pavilion, benches, observation tower, and a canoe launch
- ADFG stocks the lake with rainbow trout, and it has become a popular fishing area



What to Do If You've Noticed a Spill

If you have observed a release of a **hazardous substance**, it needs to be reported **immediately**.

If you have observed a release of oil/petroleum:

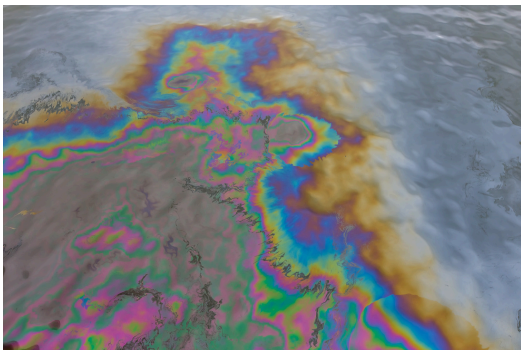
- To Water-
 - **any** release must be reported **as soon as you have knowledge** of the discharge
- To Land-
 - **More than 55 gallons**- must be reported **as soon as you have knowledge** of the release
 - **10-55 gallons**- must be reported within **48 hours** of becoming aware of the release
 - **1-10 gallons**- written record of these releases needs to be maintained and provided to ADEC by the person in charge of a facility or operation

Spills need to be reported to the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC):

- ADEC Response Team: 1-800-478-9300 or 907-269-0667
- Report Online: ReportSpills.alaska.gov

In addition, you must report a suspected underground release in any amount from an Underground Storage Tank (UST) within 24 hours to:

- UST Unit: 907-269-3055 or 907-269-7679



Where to Report a Suspected Brownfield

If there is a site that you suspect may be a brownfield, please contact the Knik Tribe Brownfields Program. Once we have some basic information about the site from you, we can further investigate the site and determine a course of action.

You can report sites to the Brownfields Program by emailing krobillard@kniktribe.org, or you can report in person at the Natural Resources Department located at 1800 Laurel Drive, Palmer, AK.

Important information to provide us regarding your site of concern:

- **Location**- be as specific as possible. Addresses, coordinates, or intersections are helpful
- **Concern**- what makes you think this is a brownfield? Did you observe contamination? Why do you suspect contamination might be present?
- **Contact Information**- If you provide your contact information, we can reach out and gather additional information if needed and keep you up to date as we investigate your reported site.



KNIK TRIBE BROWNFIELDS PROGRAM

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Website: Coming soon!

1800 Laurel Drive
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