



Reuse Success Story

Superfund Site Becomes a Flying Field for AMA Club



Left to right: A club member flying on part of the FMC Corp. site; members of the Minneapolis Piston Poppers club; a club member observing a fellow aeromodeler.

The average passerby would not look twice at an ordinary-looking, vacant field with skeletal soccer goals and a weed-ridden baseball diamond, especially one on a property that topped the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) list of the most contaminated sites in the country. However, a dedicated group of aeromodelers in Fridley, Minnesota, saw the vacant field at the cleaned-up FMC Corp. Superfund site as an opportunity. The Piston Poppers aeromodeling club now flies model airplanes at the site, a turn of events that represents the first successful example of EPA's partnership with the Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA).

Jeff Welliver is the only remaining original member of the Minneapolis Piston Poppers aeromodeling club, which was founded in 1960. After the Piston Poppers' agreement with the site owner of their previous flying field ended in September 2005, the club was desperate to find a new site. At a club meeting, one member mentioned the open field on the old FMC Corp. Superfund site in Fridley. After researching the open field, Mr. Welliver discovered it was an uncontaminated "buffer area" on part of a cleaned-up Superfund site that was once contaminated with industrial solvents.

At the time, the newly-formed partnership between EPA and AMA was beginning to receive some press, so Mr. Welliver began working through AMA's organizational structure to learn more about AMA's partnership with EPA. Eventually, Mr. Welliver was referred to Joe Beshar, the AMA flying sites eastern division coordinator. Mr. Beshar provided Mr. Welliver with an AMA site program information package, which contains materials that AMA members might find useful when seeking a new flying field. Mr. Beshar also put Mr. Welliver in touch with Tom Bloom, EPA's Superfund Redevelopment Coordinator for the Great Lakes Region. Mr. Bloom happened

to be a former project manager for the FMC Corp. site, so his familiarity with the site and key stakeholders helped Mr. Welliver in his quest to use the site as a flying field.



After hearing Mr. Welliver's proposal, Mr. Bloom made sure that aeromodeling would be an acceptable site use and would not interfere with the remedy that protects human health and the environment. Mr. Bloom also got in touch with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to let them know that a local AMA club was interested in using the site. Mr. Bloom knew the site owner from his prior work at the site, and talked to him about the Piston Poppers' interest. The site owner put Mr. Bloom in touch with Bill Greger of CDC Inc., a commercial development firm that was preparing to purchase the site from BAE Systems Inc. Mr. Greger gave an enthusiastic reception to the idea of an AMA club using the site, and agreed to begin formal discussions with Mr. Welliver and the Piston Poppers.

Before discussions began, Mr.

FMC Corp. Site History

1941-1964: Naval Ordnance manufacturing complex operated on the site

1945-1969: A tract of land south of the manufacturing complex was used for burning and disposing wastes

1981: Site investigation revealed contamination and history of waste disposal

1983: Cleanup of the site began. Site listed on the National Priorities List

1992: Construction of the site's remedy completed

2005: The Minneapolis Piston Poppers Club began using a portion of the site as a flying field

Welliver researched local noise ordinances to make sure that any noise generated from model airplanes would not violate local laws or disturb nearby residents. Mr. Welliver received help with his research from the local Parks and Recreation director and the local police chief. As agreed during their initial conversation, Mr. Welliver sent Mr. Greger specific information about the Piston Poppers' proposal, including details about which part of the site the club proposed to use, what maintenance services the club would provide in return for using the site, information about the club, a summary of AMA's mandatory club member insurance policy, and a copy of the club's agreement with the owner of their previous flying site.

In April 2006, Mr. Welliver and Mr. Greger met to discuss the club's proposal and visit the site to examine it firsthand. After discussing terms, Mr. Greger agreed to let the Piston Poppers use the site for as long as the open space was available. Mr. Greger explained that the site would eventually be developed, and future buyers or tenants might not choose to allow aeromodeling on their portion of the development. However, Mr. Greger said he would inform future buyers or tenants of the various benefits of continuing the agreement with the Piston Poppers for as long as the field remains undeveloped.

"I've got a good steward of the land here."

-Bill Greger of CDC Inc., speaking about Jeff Welliver and the Minneapolis Piston Poppers' plan to use part of the FMC Corp. Superfund site as a flying field for model airplanes.

also provided Mr. Greger with a Certificate of Insurance that protects the siteowner from liability and ensures that club members will meet safety standards when using the flying field.

The partnership between CDC Inc. and the Piston Poppers is a natural fit for many reasons, including the types of planes that the club flies. Unlike the majority of AMA clubs, the Piston Poppers are a control line flying club. Control line planes are attached to thin steel cables up to 70 ft. long, which are connected to a handle that the pilot holds to maneuver the plane and perform tricks. Control line planes are controlled directly by the pilot, rather than using remote controls; thus making them more responsive and less likely to go astray. Control line planes also require less flying space



From left to right: Lynn Leach of CDC Inc., Jeff Welliver, and Bill Greger on the flying field

than remote-controlled planes. Since the buffer area at the FMC Corp. site is relatively small, it was perfectly suited for control line planes.

In addition to keeping the site in good condition, Mr. Greger cites extra benefits of allowing the Piston Poppers to fly planes on the site, including keeping trespassers off the site and helping to combat Superfund site stigma. Mr. Greger feels strongly that the Piston Poppers are providing a positive community service by using the site. On May 17, 2006, the club cleared debris and old recreational equipment from the site and established two flying circles so that two pilots could simultaneously fly planes. The Piston Poppers have permission to use the site until January 2, 2007, at which point their agreement will be re-evaluated. Provided that development has not yet begun at the site, the club could potentially use the site again for the next flying season. Until then, members of the Piston Poppers club can enjoy flying planes in the sky above the FMC Corp. site during the long Minnesota summer days.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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For more Information on the EPA/AMA Partnership go to:
<http://www.epa.gov/superfund/programs/recycle/news/modelair.htm>