

Newport Chemical Depot

December 1941 -- Wabash River Ordnance Works is established by the US Department of War, near Newport, Indiana

June 1994 – Indiana Division of Nature Preserves (IDNP) completes “Inventory of Natural Areas and Rare Plant Species within the Newport Army Ammunition Plant”. The report identified 5 Exceptional Natural Areas: Core (680 ac.) + Buffer (1,020 ac.) = Total (1,700 ac.). Most of this area is in proposed Natural Areas & Open Space land use of the Newport Chemical Depot Reuse Plan (December 2009).

June 1994 – Same report as above. A Special Interest Natural Area was identified as approximately 1,900 acres of presettlement mesic silt loam prairie. “There are no remnants in Indiana of prairies of the size of this potential restoration. The largest prairies that remain in the state are sand prairies; thus the significance of this area is even more important because it is a silt loam prairie restoration.” The IDNP recommended that the Newport Army Ammunition Plant (NAAP) start a prairie restoration program (p. 106).

1994 – 2005; The US Army Newport Chemical Depot (formerly NAAP) restored 336 acres of tallgrass prairie at a minimum cost of \$127,589 (cost for seed and planting). Per the Indiana Division of Nature Preserves it is now by far the largest contiguous mesic silt loam (black soil) prairie in Indiana.

1996 & 2003; The Newport Chemical Depot won the US Army Environmental Security for Natural Resources Conservation Award; for prairie restoration & other natural resource conservation elements (i.e. tree planting & endangered species management).

Nov/Dec 1998 – The Newport Chemical Depot Prairie is featured in “Outdoor Indiana” pp. 40 - 47.

Sep 16, 2009 – Public meeting is held to unveil the Preferred Reuse Plan Map.

Sep 17, 2009 – Newport Chemical Depot Reuse Authority (NeCDRA) votes to make the Preferred Reuse Plan Map the basis for the Newport Chemical Depot Reuse Plan.

Sep 24 & Oct 20, 2009 – DRAFT NECD Reuse Plans are posted on www.necdra.com for review.

Oct/Nov, 2009 - Over 400 public comments in favor of absolutely saving the entire prairie were received from the beginning of October 2009 to the middle of November

2009. No comments were received in favor of destroying the prairie. Comments supporting saving the prairie were received from: Indiana Wildlife Federation, Pheasants Forever, Indiana Division of Fish & Wildlife, Hoosier Environmental Council, Vermillion County Soil & Water Conservation District, National Audubon Society, White Violet Center for Eco-Justice and hundreds more. Copies are available.

Nov 5, 2009 – The Governor, NeCDRA and Telic Corp. announced that up to 500 new jobs would be at the Newport Chemical Depot by March 31, 2009. To date there is not 1 new job at the Depot and there is no longer a timeline for Telic to have any new jobs there.

Nov 11, 2009 – In response to public comments concerning the potential destruction of the Newport Chemical Depot Prairie, another DRAFT NECD Reuse Plan is posted on www.necdra.com for review. The DRAFT Plan still does not guarantee any protection for 90% of the Newport Chemical Depot Prairie.

Nov 19, 2010 – A Public Hearing was held concerning the NECD Reuse Plan. Fifty-four people attended the Hearing; 23 spoke; 21 in favor of preserving the prairie; 2 did not mention the prairie; and none were in favor of destroying it. The transcript is available.

Nov 19, 2009 – Immediately after the Public Hearing the regularly scheduled NeCDRA Board meeting was held and the first issue was to approve the DRAFT Reuse Plan as is (with edits); but still not to guarantee preserving the Prairie. The NeCDRA vice-president (a farmer) challenged everyone in the room to come up with \$100,000 annually to lease the prairie if they wanted to preserve it from being leased for row crops.

Nov 23, 2009 – Posted on the www.necdra.com website: “At their meeting on Thursday, November 19, the Newport Chemical Depot Reuse Authority board officially approved the proposed Newport Chemical Depot Reuse Plan and Homeless Assistance Submission!

The meeting began with a presentation by Matrix Design Group on the draft reuse plan, as well as implementation strategies to ensure the community is successful in the Depot's transition. Next, Bill Laubernds, NeCDRA Executive Director, reviewed a number of "action items" planned for 2010 to continue the planning and reuse of the Depot. This was followed by the required public hearing on both the Reuse Plan and the Homeless Assistance Submission. Following the hearing and comments by NeCDRA board members, the Reuse Plan was formally approved by the board on a unanimous vote.

The NeCDRA board and staff would like to thank *everyone* who attended the meeting and spoke during the public hearing. The community's strong interest in and support of the Depot's reuse and passion for the Depot's diverse resources was very evident, which bodes well for the Depot's future. The NeCDRA would also like to thank all those in the community who reviewed the plan report and suggested edits or clarifications to the text. Your feedback will help make the Reuse Plan report a better document.

With the Reuse Plan now approved, over the next few weeks the planning team will make final

edits to the report, complete the appendices, and package the Reuse Plan and Homeless Assistance documents for submission to the Federal government.

Keep checking this website for updates, news items, maps and documents, and other information as we head into 2010 and continue preparing for the Newport Chemical Depot's new role in the community!"

No specific mention of the PRAIRIE, the single most important issue that was of concern to the community!

Dec 16, 2009 – The Final NECD Reuse Plan to be submitted to the US Army is posted on www.necdra.com . The Plan still has provisions for plowing under or paving over 90% of the prairie.

1) Reference Newport Chemical Depot Reuse Plan: Pages ES-5, ES-7 and 46 each state that the Newport CD tallgrass prairie is 461 acres. This is wrong; the tallgrass prairie is about 336 acres.

2) Reference Newport Chemical Depot Reuse Plan: Pages 45 & 46 (Exhibits 3-08 & 3-09 respectively) have boundaries showing prairie hay and restored prairie areas that are wrong. There are trees planted in some of this area. This is why there is the large discrepancy between 461 acres of prairie and the 336 actual acres of tallgrass prairie.

3) Reference Newport Chemical Depot Reuse Plan: Page 87. "Native prairie grass areas found within Agricultural and Forestry land could be preserved or used for prairie hay or other agricultural production." This statement allows for row crop production in tallgrass prairie areas.

4) Reference Newport Chemical Depot Reuse Plan: Page 98. "In addition to row crops and forestry, other types of agriculture uses would be suitable for those areas, including tallgrass prairie, prairie grass hay production, speciality and greenhouse crops, dairy production, and livestock grazing and production." Again there are many potential uses that are covered that would destroy the prairie and forested areas.

5) Also, there are forested, prairie and wetland areas that are in the proposed Business & Technology sites on the Preferred Reuse Plan Map. These natural areas should not be developed. There are thousands of other acres that that can be developed.

6) Reference Newport Chemical Depot Reuse Plan: Page 95 (Exhibit 5-02). The pie chart claims "A Balanced Perspective" between Built Environment (49%) and Natural Environment (51%). This is wrong. The Plan includes Agricultural & Forestry (18%) as part of Natural

Environment. Agricultural is not Natural. Therefore, once the Agriculture is removed from the "Natural Environment" another about 682 acres would not be Natural. Leaving about 42% (of 7,130 acres) in Natural Environment. This would be a best case scenario if none of the prairie in the Agricultural & Forestry designated areas was plowed under.

7) Reference Newport Chemical Depot Reuse Plan: Page 126. **The Plan recommended that NO Public Benefit Conveyance be approved for all of the following applicants: Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Sycamore Trails RC & D, Vermillion County Parks & Recreation Board and Wabash River Heritage Corridor Commission.**

8) **The NECD Reuse Plan currently allows, any NeCDRA Board, at any Board meeting (or without a meeting!) the ability to vote to plow up or pave over the prairie in accordance with the Reuse Plan; or even clear forests for agricultural production.** It is so vague/flexible with so many options, that if implemented, it is a license to do about anything that the NeCDRA wants to do.

9) According to BRAC the Reuse Plan is suppose to be Community supported. The potential to destroy the prairie is not supported by the Community.

March 2010 – Current income from agricultural leases is nearly \$716,000.

March 2010 - The NeCDRA is applying for an Economic Benefit Conveyance to get all 7,000 acres of the Newport Chemical Depot **AT NO COST; and they don't want to preserve the prairie??**

June 5, 2010 – The Indiana Wildlife Federation passed Resolution No. 2010-01 to preserve the natural areas and agricultural areas at the US Army's Newport Chemical Depot by strongly urging "the State of Indiana through the Indiana Department of Natural Resources and any other appropriate agencies to conserve and protect the aforementioned natural resources for compatible public outdoor recreation activities such as hunting, fishing, trapping, wildlife watching, mushroom hunting, hiking, biking; and to conserve and protect the agricultural lands for future agricultural production areas or future restoration areas." See www.indianawildlife.org/allResolutions2010s.htm for the complete resolution.

June 8, 2010 – A letter was sent from US Senator Richard Lugar to Dorothy Robyn, Deputy Undersecretary of Defense Installations and Environment. The letter included 5 letters from the following: Indiana Division of Izaak Walton League of America, the Indiana Director of the National Audubon Society, the Indiana Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts, the Indiana Sportsmen's Roundtable, and the Indiana Wildlife Federation. In part the letter

stated, "These organizations requested that a portion of the natural areas at the Newport Chemical Depot be titled to the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). They believe that the IDNR will provide proper stewardship of this land and its wildlife for use and access by future generations."

July 7, 2010 – A letter was received in response to the above mentioned letter from Roland Biser, Chief Congressional Affairs Contact Office. In part, the letter stated "The Local Redevelopment Authority (LRA) is the designated organization as defined within the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process to speak with one voice to the Department of Defense. The base Closure Community Redevelopment & Homeless Assistance Act of 1994 defines the process used by the LRA to conduct state & local screening for non-federal users of the surplus property. During the screening period there were four Notices of Interest (NOI) received and evaluated for inclusion in the redevelopment plan. In response to the expressions of interest, and balancing the economic needs of the community, the Newport Chemical Depot Reuse Authority (NECDRA) established a Natural Areas Management plan. The Newport Chemical Depot Reuse Authority developed a balanced redevelopment plan resulting in 49% of the surplus acres designated for economic redevelopment and a 51% of the surplus acres designated as open space and natural areas. NECDRA's Reuse Plan, approved on April 7, 2010 by the Housing & Urban Development (HUD), balanced both the community needs by maximizing local job creation and investment while insuring the conservation of natural resources."

In fact, 1) the NeCDRA denied all 4 NOIs including the IDNR's, 2) there is no Natural Areas Management Plan that has been "established" and 3) only 32% was designated as open space and natural areas (page ES-17 of the NECD Reuse Plan). However, 51% was designated as Natural Environment. This 51% Natural Environment included lots of row crop agricultural areas that are not "natural". And yes the Reuse Plan was approved by HUD in that there were no homeless organizations that requested to use the property.

Of course, the letter's statement that the conservation of natural resources are insured is incorrect; as long as, there is a possibility that the majority of the prairie could be plowed under or paved over.

September 15, 2010 – Lt. Gov. announces that a feasibility study will determine by early next year if a direct coal liquefaction plant, along with 500 jobs, will be constructed on a 1,500-acre site at the former Newport Chemical Depot in Vermillion County.

September 2010 – The US Army is to complete National Environmental Policy Act documentation (with public comment period) in the near future. The USFWS is to review the US Army's Biological Assessment concerning the federally endangered Indiana bat at Newport Chemical Depot when completed. Then the

Environmental Assessment for transfer of the property is to be made available for public comment. The NeCDRA is expecting transfer of approximately 6,500 acres to be completed to them by during the 1st or 2nd quarter of 2011.

November 8, 2010 – The Notice of Intent for the Finding Of Suitability to Transfer 6,500 acres was published in The Daily Clintonian. Public comments are due to the Army by December 3. The website published in the newspaper was <http://www.hqda.army.mil/acsimweb/brac/envfost.htm> ; however the actual website is http://www.hqda.army.mil/acsimweb/brac/env_fost.htm . I got this after inquiring to the Depot.

November 13, 2010 – The Hoosier Chapter of the Sierra Club passed a resolution similar to the resolution passed by the Indiana Wildlife Federation.

November 18, 2010 – The Environmental Assessment for the Reuse of the Newport Chemical Depot is available for public comment. Comments are due December 17, 2010.

Other Information:

1) The habitat on NECD represents an outstanding opportunity for restoration management for 2,000 acres of forests, 213 acres of wetlands, 3,000 acres of agricultural lands, 336 acres of the largest contiguous black soil Tallgrass prairie in the State; including 176 acres of High Quality Natural Communities that are rare or critically imperiled in the State and 680 acres (core acres) of Exceptional Natural Areas.

2) There is documentation of over 150 species of birds, 35 mammals, 15 species of reptiles, 15 species of amphibians and 32 species of fish, and more than 400 species of plants (including five State watch-list species).

3) Nine (9) endangered species are known to be present on NECD, Indiana bat, Peregrine falcon, Northern harrier, Virginia rail, Henslow's sparrow, Sedge wren, Osprey, Upland Sandpiper and Least Bittern. The state endangered Peregrine Falcon hunts wild pheasants in the prairie.

4) Sixteen (16) animal species of Indiana State Special Concern have been documented on the Depot.

5) The Newport Chemical Depot was nominated as a National Audubon Society Important Bird Area.

6) The Indiana bat needs protected in accordance with the Endangered Species Act.

7) Migratory birds need protected in accordance with the Migratory Bird Protection Act and E.O. 13186 - Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds.

8) Wetlands need protected in accordance with the Clean Water Act.

9) Farmlands, forest land, pastureland, cropland, or other land (but not water or urban built-up land) needs protected in accordance with the Farmland Protection Policy Act.