

## **Transforming Contaminated Mud to a Productive Urban Wetland: Resolves Environmental Liability and Spurs Redevelopment**

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**Background/Objectives.** Urban sediment remediation sites present unique challenges in developing and implementing innovative approaches to meet the goals of the responsible party, local landowners, and municipal and public stakeholders. The Burnham Canal Superfund Alternative Site illustrates that through long-term planning and active involvement with stakeholders, the mutual goals of all parties can be achieved. This results in an “end product” that resolves responsible party liability while creating the conversion of an old urban “eyesore” into an ecological, productive, urban wetland and spurring Brownfields redevelopment.

**Approach/Activities.** The presentation will focus on the actions necessary to achieve these multiple goals. Key is mapping out the long-term approach (that is, the creative vision), building partnerships with stakeholders, actively pursuing avenues for governmental funding and, when momentum is built, completing the deal. At the same time, the approach needs to meet the responsible party’s goal of achieving certainty in the form of monetizing the remediation costs and transferring long-term care responsibility to a governmental entity. Melding Brownfields redevelopment principles along with government funding of ecological improvements provide the mechanisms for achieving the goal. Changing the focus from a narrow remediation project to a Brownfields redevelopment opens up new avenues for achieving the goals of the responsible party and other stakeholders. One unique aspect of this project, essential to achieving the goals, was moving this Superfund Alternative Site from federal jurisdiction to the state under U.S. EPA’s deferral policy. The Burnham Canal served as the test case for the national model program.

**Results/Lessons Learned.** The Burnham Canal will be transformed from a “dead end” unused shipping canal to a productive urban wetland. Historic sediment contamination will be stabilized and capped, a betterment layer added, and an urban wetland constructed. Responsible party liability is monetized by using the betterment layer to address long-term cap maintenance with any residual liability transferred to the local sewerage district that is undertaking the project through Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grants. Major lessons learned are that innovation takes time, effort, vision, and champions. An engaged stakeholder group with a public/private partnership mentality is important. Once established and the vision accepted, they become allies and supporters. Active, flexible high-level management is essential to achieving the responsible party’s and stakeholders’ goals with minimal controversy.