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ADEQ and Director Steve Owens Honored for Efforts to Restore Standin' on the Corner Park in Winslow

PHOENIX -- The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) and ADEQ Director Steve Owens have been honored by the City of Winslow and the city's Standin' on the Corner Foundation for their efforts to restore the Standin' on the Corner site in Winslow.

Director Owens received a proclamation from the Winslow City Council thanking him and the department for their commitment to helping the city clean up the site and reopen the park to the public. Director Owens also received a personal letter of thanks from the Standin' on the Corner Foundation.

The park and monument were closed after a fire gutted the former J.C. Penney/Rasco Building in October 2004 and created an environmental hazard. A mural on an exterior wall of the building is an integral part of the park, but fire damage rendered the wall unstable, making the park unsafe for visitors. Concerns about asbestos contamination in the charred rubble had prevented efforts to remove the debris and reopen the park.

The City of Winslow implemented a cleanup plan with the grant funds provided by ADEQ under the department's Brownfields State Response Grant program. ADEQ also worked closely with the city and provided technical oversight of the cleanup.

In May of this year, Director Owens announced that ADEQ was awarding an additional \$115,000 grant to the City of Winslow in Navajo County to finish the cleanup and help reopen the park. That award brought ADEQ's total funding for the cleanup to \$315,000, the largest amount of funding ADEQ has ever provided to a community under the Brownfields program.

Because the money came from federal dollars, Director Owens personally contacted EPA's Deputy Administrator in Washington, DC, the second-in-command at the agency, to get expedited approval to give Winslow more than \$200,000 total for the project, which is the usual limit on Brownfields grants.

"The Standin' on the Corner monument is a very special place, and we put on a full-court press to get the needed approval," Owens said. "Winslow deserved the extra money. While this was an unprecedented amount of funding, it has been worth every penny of it to get the Standin' on the Corner site cleaned up and the park reopened."

In their letter, the Standin' on the Corner Foundation members expressed their "sincere appreciation" to Director Owens for his "diligence and perseverance in assisting the City of Winslow, the Standin' on the Corner Foundation, and ultimately the citizens of Arizona and Winslow, in cleaning up and restoring a vital portion of our historic and famous downtown."

The letter added: "Your concern shows how dedicated you are to your position, and to us demonstrates your dedication and commitment to rural Arizona."