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ADEQ Reaches Milestone with Completion of First Cleanup of State Superfund Site, East Washington Fluff in Phoenix

PHOENIX – (March 13, 2013) – Arizona Department of Environmental Quality officials announced today that the agency has reached a milestone, the first completion of cleanup work on a state superfund site, the East Washington Fluff site in central Phoenix.

The 10-acre site, located on the southwest corner of East Buckeye Road and South Fifth Street, was once major, contaminated urban blight near Phoenix's central core with more than 6,000 tons of shredded auto materials and other waste from an abandoned metal salvage yard.

But the signing of the record of decision makes it the first of ADEQ's 36 Water Quality Assurance Revolving Fund (WQARF) sites in the state to be removed from the WQARF registry.

"This is a huge day in the history of the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality," ADEQ Director Henry Darwin said. "The East Washington Fluff site presented major challenges to overcome during a long period of time and it's a credit to our staff to see this come to fruition."

Phil McNeely, environmental programs manager for the city of Phoenix, also said he was pleased to see the site removed from the state superfund list.

"ADEQ, EPA, and the city worked closely together for many years to transition this site from a blighted eyesore to a property that is now an opportunity for business redevelopment near downtown in a key area within walking distance of Chase Field," McNeely said.

In 1986, National Metals Co. abandoned the site and declared bankruptcy, leaving thousands of tons of shredded glass, plastic, rubber and fabric behind.

ADEQ gained access to the property in 1997 and inspectors determined that it had levels of cadmium, chromium, lead and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) which exceeded state and federal U.S. Environmental Protection Agency health standards. A 12-foot-high fence and warning signs were posted around the site and the site was added to the WQARF registry in June 1999.

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The EPA placed three monitoring wells at the site in 2000 and no groundwater contamination was found. But a report conducted by the Arizona Department of Health Services and Agency for Toxic Substances Disease Registry determined that a health hazard existed.

In 2001, about 5,907 tons of hazardous waste and 819 tons of additional solid waste were removed from the site and a protective soil cap installed to prevent exposure to any remaining contamination in the soil. After ADEQ completed investigative reports, the site was purchased at public auction in 2006 and a deed restriction entered that the engineered soil cap must remain in place and that the site be used for only business or commercial development.

In 2008, soil sampling beneath a concrete slab removed by the property's new owner showed lead contamination at low levels and about 235 tons of soil was removed. A layer of crushed, recycled concrete debris about two feet deep was placed on top of the existing engineered cap in that part of the site. The concrete debris was further crushed to 3 inches or smaller and spread across the site.

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