

*2005 SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
RESTORATION INDIVIDUAL  
NOMINATION*

**LAWRENCE R.  
OLDERBAK**



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## MR. LAWRENCE R. OLDERBAK

### **BACKGROUND**

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Mr. Lawrence R. Olderbak is an Environmental Engineer and the Restoration Program Manager at the 319th Air Refueling Wing, 319th Mission Support Group, 319th Civil Engineer Squadron, Environmental Management Flight, Grand Forks Air Force Base, North Dakota. His federal service began in March 1994 and continues today.

### **POSITION DESCRIPTION**

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Mr. Olderbak performs as a base environmental engineer and implements environmental policies and programs that embrace public health and safety, welfare and protection of installation natural resources. He personally directs the Restoration Program at Grand Forks Air Force Base overseeing 57 corrective action sites, 7 Environmental Restoration Program (ERP) sites and 2 Military Munitions Response Program sites and 3 open operating ranges.

### **AWARDS AND SERVICES**

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Mr. Olderbak received kudos from the Community Co-Chair at the Restoration Advisory Board meeting for an "outstanding performance and job well done" by informing and educating the public on all restoration efforts. He also received a letter of appreciation from AMC's Director of Installations and Mission Support for his presentation at AMC Headquarters' Annual Restoration Corporate Board meeting outlining the steps to achieve remedy-in-place (RIP) at ERP sites. He continues as a leader to attack complex problems and always searches for a way to perfect

ongoing projects. Without his proactive efforts and forward vision, Grand Forks AFB would spend significantly more in annual remedial costs. His plans and programs are emulated by other Air Force installations.

Mr. Olderbak received a Bachelor of Science Civil Engineer degree in 1992, and has completed 20 additional college credits of environmental course work since his initial degree. He has passed the Fundamentals of Engineering exam and is en-route to Professional Registration.

Mr. Olderbak continues to receive additional training to keep informed on all aspects of environmental restoration. He is an active member of his church men's club which is currently developing a dilapidated lake resort into a church retreat facility, and personally provides voluntary yard care and rides for the elderly at a local rest home.

### **ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

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Mr. Olderbak's superior leadership with a "Can Do" attitude allowed Grand Forks AFB to be the first AMC installation to have RIP at all ERP sites. He effectively implemented aggressive, cost-effective remedial actions which coined the phrase "better, cheaper, faster" an ERP remedial approach to Performance-Based Management that allowed Grand Forks to Fast Track their ERP sites saving \$10M in investigative and study phases -- AWESOME! Mr. Olderbak authored a superb ERP Management Action Plan keenly prioritizing risk at all sites. Other accomplishments included eliminating clean wells from sampling efforts saving 200 man-hours and \$15K in sampling costs.

Mr. Olderbak also authored five decision documents impressing North Dakota regulators with their quality and time to complete saving the Air Force \$150K in contractor costs. He also implemented a pollution reduction strategy and incorporated it into all project phases. For example, he reduced well-drilling disposal costs through the use of geoprobes saving \$20K on one project alone. Under his direction, Grand Forks AFB has 90% of their ERP sites closed. Leads All AMC Installations!

### *Fast Track Cleanup*

Mr. Olderbak implemented a fast track approach to cleanup which involved immediate discussions with the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDH) regulatory agency. He accomplished this by accelerating negotiations, statements of work and discussing probable remedies for each site. Site Investigations began immediately upon regulator “buy-in.” This involved the removal of contaminated soil during the investigation stage based on accurate field sampling results. His unsurpassed partnering with the regulators allowed for maximum work plan flexibility enabling speedy field mobilization. Mr. Olderbak also persuaded regulators to accept confirmation sampling as final at a controversial power pole storage yard saving \$120K in additional testing and disposal costs.

Other time saving efforts included innovative, remedial techniques through negotiations with the regulators to decrease monitoring frequency at 2 sites saving 400 man-hours and \$50,000 in contract costs. This “Fast Track” partnership with the regulators allowed Grand Forks to be the first installation in AMC to achieve an amazing ERP "sites finished" rate of 100% as well as the first AMC installation to achieve RIP at all sites - 12 years ahead of

Air Force Defense Program Goals! Mr. Olderbak’s fast track approach ultimately enabled the reutilization of many ERP sites for future mission use avoiding “Land Use Controls,” potentially saving millions in cleanup costs- Setting the standard for others to emulate!

### *Innovative Technology Demonstration/Validation and Implementation*

Mr. Olderbak remains vigilant for new techniques to reduce cleanup costs! He remediated 2 landfills via natural attenuation/capping saving \$150K by focusing the feasibility study in the direction of the preferred remedy. Additionally, he proved phyto-remediation was an effective remedial technique for a TCE contaminated site saving over \$500K in excavation and disposal costs!

He also worked with regulators from the NDDH to change the approved post closure maintenance for two capped landfills. By suggesting a change in the seed mixture from a native prairie to a Kentucky bluegrass, the caps established a more solidified turf reducing erosion and repair costs saving thousands in future maintenance costs.



Mr. Olderbak innovatively employed a real-time water sampler to speed remedial field sample results to guide regulator/stakeholder decisions. The sample results which combined with on-site field restoration

manager and regulator consensus decisions allowed the project to continue at a significantly accelerated and effective manner, finishing well ahead of schedules.

Mr. Olderbak continues to be ever vigilant with local research/community partners keeping watch for technology to move sites to no further action! An ongoing ERP strategic focus at Grand Forks is to keep project costs the same with no inflation by improving the efficiency of operations at each site. This type of focus has saved the Air Force millions in future monitoring costs.

### ***Partnerships Addressing Environmental Cleanup Issues Between DOD and Other Entities***

To maintain optimum relations with the NDDH, Mr. Olderbak participated in proactive weekly regulator discussions ensuring transparency while developing a strong partnership - “One Team, One Fight!” His superb partnering with the regulators, superior program management, and community trust, has resulted in a “WIN/WIN” situation for Grand Forks AFB, the NDDH, and the local community!

Mr. Olderbak assured every restoration project at Grand Forks AFB was accomplished via an accelerated effort by pre-selecting multiple remediation methods prior to beginning field work, made possible through the development of good regulatory partnerships. Regulators and base officials were readily available during all phases of investigation allowing field test results to direct the level of work required to complete the project. Mr. Olderbak’s superb partnering skills with the regulators help bring Grand Forks to the forefront as the only installation in AMC with RIP at all ERP sites.

## **RABS**

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Mr. Olderbak’s has established and maintained good relationships with the regulators and the local community through Grand Fork’s Restoration Advisory Board (RAB). As the (RAB) executive secretary, he served as the master of ceremonies updating stakeholders on site status via presentations and base tours. In addition, Mr. Olderbak was a keen public educator developing restoration fact sheets / newsletters always advising the community on ERP issues and initiatives. He maintained outstanding regulator rapport evident in base/regulator “Tag Team” public briefs at RAB meetings. Mr. Olderbak developed an easy-to-use Community Relations Plan (CRP) distributed annually to all stakeholders. The CRP reflects the current ERP status and the strategic focus to gain response complete as quickly and efficiently as possible while carefully protecting human health and the environment. He also assured fast, direct, personal responses to public queries relieving community concerns and enhancing public trust and buy-in to Grand Fork’s ERP.

### ***Opportunities for Small and Small Disadvantaged Businesses in Environmental Restoration***

Mr. Olderbak vigorously pursued small or small disadvantaged businesses in environmental restoration. Small businesses have been sub-contractors for most of the installation’s field work for the last two years. With a mature program, opportunities become few for contract work at Grand Forks; however, Mr. Olderbak constantly works with local contracting officers to encourage small and disadvantaged businesses to bid on and perform services needed. Currently, small businesses are performing all sampling activities on-base

and most maintenance activities required at RIP sites.

### ***Reducing Risk to Human Health and the Environment***

To reduce risk to human health and the environment, Mr. Olderbak implemented various projects to correct groundwater and soil contamination. One being, the implementation of the base's own on-base land treatment facility receiving 2500 cubic yards to date of contaminated soil for land farming. Contaminated soils from various projects are removed and transported to the on-base land treatment facility where the soil is fully processed to clean regulatory standards. The soil is then reused for other projects on-base saving the installation thousands of dollars in disposal and backfill costs while minimizing further risk to human health and the environment by diverting disposal to an off-base facility. This process has prevented land use restrictions from being implemented increasing the installations future mission capabilities.

He also oversaw the planting of 433 super absorbent trees at a heavily contaminated TCE site concisely controlling groundwater flow and allowing no off-site contaminant migration. Phyto-remediation at Grand Forks AFB was the first successful cold weather test site resulting from solid research and teamwork saving over \$1M in disposal costs.



Mr. Olderbak also excelled in rehabilitating the base's natural resources. To allow unrestricted mission use, he returned an explosive ordnance disposal site to native prairie grass. He also curtailed mowing to protect bird habitat on lagoon systems and landfills throughout the base ensuring critical nesting grounds remained undisturbed.

All of these self-sacrificing efforts on the part of Mr. Olderbak have resulted in the regulators saluting Grand Forks AFB for its restoration efforts and showcase the installation as the state of North Dakota's leader in remediating contaminated land and groundwater for future reuse!

