

Successful DoD – Tribal Partnership



COLORADO RIVER INDIAN TRIBES: POSTON GAP FILLER ANNEX AND COLORADO RIVER WAR RELOCATION CAMP

The Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT), located along the Colorado River in California and Arizona, became a partner in the Department of Defense-supported Native American Lands Environmental Mitigation Program (NALEMP) in 2008 with the signing of their first Cooperative Agreement (CA). From May 1942 until November 1945, approximately 6,400 acres of CRIT reservation land was used by the War Relocation Agency (WRA) of the U.S.

Department of Defense (DoD) for the Colorado River War Relocation Camp. For the duration of World War II (WWII), the Colorado River War Relocation Camp, comprised of Camp I, Camp II and Camp III, interned as many as 18,000 Japanese Americans. After WWII, the DoD relinquished the land back to the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in trust for CRIT. In 1954, the Tribal Council of the CRIT approved a lease to the U.S. Air Force (USAF) for 18.73 acres of Tribal property; this parcel became the Poston Gap Filler Annex, used by the USAF until 1962 for a radar facility. The Poston Gap Filler Annex utilized 17 existing structures from Camp I of the Camp. NALEMP funded cleanup of Camp I.



Poston Gap Filler Annex partially collapsed buildings.
2007. Courtesy: CRIT

Prior to NALEMP CA funding, a 2005 NALEMP site assessment, and a 2007 site review confirmed all of the remaining buildings contained asbestos-containing materials (ACM) and lead-based paint. In addition, all of the buildings were found to be severely dilapidated, or near collapse, making them extremely dangerous to residents, especially children, living within a mile of the area. CRIT's first CA in 2008 provided funding for the development of the Tribe's Strategic Project Implementation Plan (SPIP), a guidance document which directed the Tribe's work addressing former military impacts to tribal lands. This first CA also allowed the Tribe, with guidance from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Los Angeles District, to begin ACM and lead-based paint mitigation activities on nine buildings at the former Poston Gap Filler Annex, including sampling, demolition, and removal of buildings and debris. An additional CA in 2009 provided funding that enabled the Tribe to continue ACM and lead-based paint mitigation activities on the remaining eight buildings.

In addition to the 17 buildings at the Poston Gap Filler Annex, military impacts at the Colorado River War Relocation Camp included concrete pads and debris from a hospital, pump stations, and warehouse area, as well as tanks from a water treatment plant. Beginning in 2010, after the completion of remediation work at the Poston Gap Filler Annex, the Tribe focused next on clean-up of these remaining impacts on the Colorado River War Relocation Camp. A Phase I Site Assessment and a Phase II Site Investigation were conducted; in addition, a Phase III Project Removal Design was developed to guide the remaining restoration work.

In 2011, CRIT and its contractors abated lead-based paint from the exterior of the water treatment tank and aerator, then demolished and removed the tank, aerator, and an underground storage tank associated with the water treatment plant. The Tribe removed and disposed of the concrete pads and debris associated with the pump stations, hospital, and warehouse area. Soil sampling was conducted at the location of former sewage treatment sludge ponds and a maintenance building; all sampling results were below State of Arizona remediation standards.



With completion of all remediation activities in summer 2012, the CRIT's concern about health and environmental hazards has been removed. The area can now be utilized for other tribal purposes.

Poston Gap Filler Annex after building removal. 2009.
Courtesy: CRIT.