

LRCO Takes on Another Big Community Improvement Project

At a special meeting of the LRCO Board of Supervisors on December 6, 2011 the board voted to exercise an option-to-buy on the 4.6 acre, former Midwest/Standard refinery property at 971 N. Cedar St. on Laramie's west side. This property has been an eyesore and dangerous community nuisance for decades. With the winding down of the Laramie River Restoration Project the LRCO Board has been discussing the purchase and cleanup of this property for almost a year.

After purchasing an option to buy in late June, LRCO staff procured a \$54,500 Total Brownfield Assessment (TBA) grant from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to have Phase I & II environmental assessment studies performed. These studies included a record search, 16 temporary groundwater monitoring wells, 19 surface soil samples, 17 subsurface soil samples, and over 100 soil and building materials samples for asbestos. Hundreds of analyses for a variety of hydrocarbons and metals were performed and results of the 1000+ page report were discussed in detail with the consultants who did the study, as well as experts from the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality and EPA. While there were problems identified on the property it was agreed that they are not insurmountable and the board voted to move forward with the purchase. All environmental reports will be available for public viewing in the Wyoming Room of the Albany County Public Library, in a file labeled Yttrium Plant.

Once the property is purchased, the next step will be to enroll in the DEQ's Voluntary Remediation Program in which more sampling and analyses will be performed, leading to a detailed Remedy Agreement, which gives assurances with respect to the required cleanup. In fall of 2012 we will apply for a large cleanup grant from the EPA.

While not traditional agriculture, we at LRCO firmly believe that reviving this neglected industrial site fits our mission of "...promoting the health, safety, and general welfare of Albany County Citizens through a responsible conservation ethic" well. In fact, an individual or private entity would not have been eligible for the initial EPA grant. Local government entities like are LRCO, however, are eligible for these programs and uniquely suited to take on this type of grass roots project.

At this point we aren't certain what we will do with the property after it is cleaned up, but the cleanup itself will constitute a huge success. LRCO Chair, Nancy Bath says she is "happy that LRCO can take this opportunity to work with other agencies and the community to take on a project that really matters.

