


The Amsterdam Volgermeer Principles



The remediation of the 100 ha Volgermeer site near Amsterdam in the Netherlands is a key example of the remediation of what was once a heavily polluted waste site. A 20-year period of exploring options (1980-2000) followed the discovery of the problem and the closure of the waste site. This ushered in five years (2000-2005) of feasibility studies and remedial plans. The actual remediation took only five years (2005-2010).

The completion of the remedial work and the start of aftercare were marked by an international conference (April 2011) where experts from various disciplines exchanged experiences and discussed approaches. Examples were discussed from all over the world, including Eastern European waste sites, mine tailing sites and pesticides dumps in Asia and Africa. The conference ended with participants making a combined effort to encapsulate the lessons in six guiding principles for addressing the complex problems of dealing with heavily polluted waste sites: the Amsterdam Volgermeer Principles (please turn over).



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- 1.** Do not engineer against nature. Work with the capacity of nature itself to solve environmental problems.
 - 2.** Search for a well balanced combination of civil engineering and green rehabilitation measures to design a sustainable and cost-effective remediation plan for hazardous waste sites.
 - 3.** Let time be a friend (do not overreact). Take the first steps necessary to mitigate uncontrolled pollution and build upon them over time in order to create sustainable solutions.
 - 4.** Recognise that it is essential to exchange knowledge (bio-geo-chemical-civil engineering) within the project setting and also on a broader scale.
 - 5.** Involve the public because genuine interaction with all stakeholders is really important in terms of finding solutions and acceptance of the final remediation measures.
 - 6.** Make sure there is a socio-economic incentive. Let improvement of the socio-economic situation be a powerful driving force for any chosen solution.

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For the clean-up of the former Volgermeer dump site, consulting engineers Tauw and Witteveen+Bos joined forces in 2000. Under the name of Adviescombinatie Volgermeer (ACV) they took up the challenge to turn this highly contaminated area into a safe and nature-rich environment. The remediation is now completed and is a success. ACV has grown into a specialist in the field of hazardous waste site remediation. Therefore, cooperation will be continued in other projects.

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