Former Mill Redeveloped to Create 500 Jobs



An aerial view of the redeveloped property, with module construction underway.

Brewer, Maine

The City of Brewer is located in the northwestern portion of the state of Maine along the Penobscot River and has a rich history of paper manufacturing. Beginning in 1889, Eastern Fine Paper operated a lumber mill, then moved to lumber and pulp, and finally become a pulp and paper manufacturer. The company owned and operated a mill in the city for more than 100 years. It became the city's largest property tax payer and largest employer, employing more than 900 people at its peak.

In September of 2000, Eastern Fine Paper's parent company filed for bankruptcy protection. The company was unable to recover and in January 2004, Eastern Fine Paper filed for bankruptcy and closed its operations leaving 430 residents unemployed. In the months following the closure, the City formed South Brewer Redevelopment, LLC (SBR) to spearhead the assessment, cleanup and redevelopment of the 41-acre Eastern Fine Paper mill property located on the Penobscot River. In May 2004, SBR obtained ownership of the mill through tax foreclosure.

In 2004, using funds from an EPA Brownfields State and Tribal grant, Maine's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) initiated an environmental assessment on the property. Results from this assessment indicated that an emergency removal was necessary and EPA Region 1's Emergency Response and Planning Branch performed a time-critical removal action. As part of the removal action, Maine DEP and EPA Region 1 conducted a number of removal activities including: consolidating and staging hundreds of drums, totes and chemical containers; inventorying and staging laboratory chemicals; removing, consolidating, staging and disposing of thousands of fluorescent bulbs, mercury switches, thermostats, fire extinguishers and polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) ballasts; consolidating, staging and removing empty containers; bulking contents of similar chemical containers; draining, removing and consolidating PCB transformers; and assisting in the loadout of chemicals and oils for reuse, recycling and disposal.

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JUST THE FACTS:

- Property redevelopment was completed with the help of EPA Brownfields Assessment, Cleanup, and Revolving Loan Fund grants, as well as Brownfields State and Tribal funding.
- The former paper mill was transformed into a modular construction facility which began operations in 2008.
- The facility hosted a grand opening on August 15, 2008, to celebrate the successful cleanup and redevelopment of the property.

The new manufacturing facility is expected to provide 500 well-paid jobs.

In 2005, the City of Brewer was awarded a $350,000 EPA Brownfields Assessment grant to assist with the current assessment efforts conducted on the property. By October 2007, the final assessment reports were completed and cleanup was underway. In 2006, SBR was awarded a Brownfields Cleanup grant as well as two supplemental grants awarded in 2008 to fund cleanup activities at the property. Simultaneously, the City of Brewer was awarded a $1 million Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund grant to help the City address issues with contaminated properties.

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Visit the EPA Brownfields Web site at:
http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/

While the assessment and cleanup were taking place, SBR began looking for developers and reuse ideas for the property. Initially, SBR scheduled the property to be redeveloped as an adaptive reuse property, meaning the existing buildings would be adapted for store fronts, apartments, and office space. For a variety of reasons, they decided not to proceed with the initial plan and instead chose to go with a new idea and developer, Niemann Capital. While working with their new developer, officials from the redevelopment corporation were approached by the Cianbro Corporation in February 2007. Cianbro Corporation is a construction and construction services company that specializes in heavy industrial, energy systems, marine, commercial, and industrial construction. Because of the property's proximity to the water, it was a good fit for a modular construction facility, where large pieces of machinery or components are built and then shipped to the site where they will be used. Since the city had a highly skilled workforce and there was the potential of leveraging 500 high paying jobs, SBR seized the opportunity to work with Cianbro Corporation. The redevelopment corporation met with their developer who, upon hearing of the offer, agreed to close the contract. This allowed SBR to partner with Cianbro Corporation. To assist with costs associated with the property, Cianbro Corporation applied for and received a $550,000 loan from the City of Brewer's EPA Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund.



Demolition in progress on main mill buildings at the former Eastern Fine Paper property.

The former Eastern Fine Paper mill property has been renamed the Eastern Manufacturing Facility. Modular component manufacturing began at the yard in April 2008, to support a $7 billion refinery expansion project in Port Arthur, Texas. The facility currently employs more than 358 people and is expected to employ 500 well-paid, highly skilled workers by the end of the year. On August 15, 2008, the facility hosted a grand opening celebration and open house for the community to mark the successful cleanup and redevelopment of the property. The Mayor of Brewer, EPA officials, state representatives, U.S. Senators and Representatives, and the CEO of Cianbro Corporation attended the event.