

# Windscreen planted in 200 West to control dust

The land between Highway 241 and a modular office complex in the 200 West Area looks like an ocean beach — nearly all sand with a few tufts of hardy plants. Small dunes are growing at the edges of nearby parking lots.

But there's no roar of the ocean here. Only a hissing noise when a strong wind blows, as sand pelts office buildings and vehicles. People have to wear goggles and dust masks outdoors. When high winds raise a cloud of dust in the area, employees are moved to the 200 East Area or sent home.

Mother Nature has frustrated previous efforts to reseed the ground seared by last summer's range fire. Many of the grass seedlings planted after the fire have been blown away, covered up or literally ground away by the frequent sand assaults.

When CH2M HILL Hanford Group offered to help with the soil stabilization effort led by the Department of Energy and Fluor Hanford, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory advised a windscreen of trees would help. CHG bought 1,400 willow trees, and DynCorp Tri-Cities Services planted them with technical support from Duratek. It's a team effort to form a living, growing barrier between the sand and employees in office complexes south of the Waste Receiving and Processing facility.

PNNL suggested a specialized Australian hybrid willow that grows quickly without sending out a far-reaching root system that might disturb a nearby septic tile field. An irrigation system was set up to keep the double row of trees growing.

"The team's main interest is in protecting Hanford employees," said CHG's John Hobbs, Environmental Safety Health and Quality Assurance director for single-shell tanks. "A few of our employees have missed work because of respiratory illnesses caused by blowing dust. It's inconvenient for employees to have to pick up and move when the wind gusts, and it impacts work done outdoors."

The blowing dust clogs filtering systems and can shut down outdoor operations such as tank farm work.

After the trees are planted, efforts by the DOE and contractor team led by Fluor Hanford to stabilize the soil will continue, according to Ray Johnson of Fluor Hanford. Sagebrush seedlings grown in a nursery will be planted this fall, and the blown-out area will be reseeded. Officials are also considering installing center-pivot irrigation systems to water about 250 acres of planted groundcover until it is mature enough to grow on its own.

"The windscreen will reduce blowing surface dust and reduce the breathable dust that is the health concern," said Hobbs. "Much work remains to be done to stabilize the area and eliminate the dust source." ♦



**This sprinkler is part of the irrigation system put in for the double row of willow trees being planted by DynCorp Tri-Cities Services employees (inset) as a windbreak in the 200 West Area.**