

A Wind Erosion History
in
Antelope Acres
by
Robert Kerekes

During December of 2002 I moved to 93rd Street West just south of West Avenue F on the east side of the street. I would travel west, by mountain bike, on Avenue F, where I encountered sand dunes across the road such as I had to get off my bike and walk. To my left were concurrent fences running from north to south, parallel to 93rd Street. Most of the fences were mostly buried under dunes of sand but with vegetation. Beyond to the left, going south, was a farmer's field that stretched to a road at about 100th Street. Different crops were grown there, onions I remember.

A large section of the field, off of F, wasn't looking good. The last crop grown was winter barley. There was a central area, just off of F, where the barley barely grew. Radiating out from there from bad to better but not good was more of the not doing very well barley crop.

Where the barley was doing the worst it became obvious that the wind had blown the top soil plus much more away and the barley was trying to grow on hardpan. After the crop was gone it was all drifting, blowing sand from then on. And the sand more and more drifted towards the west end of 47513 93rd Street West.

Meanwhile a women named Linda bought 47513 93rd Street West. Her dream was to raise and board horses there and to this end she spent much time installing corrals throughout the property. In addition, for some unknown reason, she cleared all remaining vegetation.

Before long her property became a sand storm, blowing place with thick clouds of sand in the air much of the time. The sand came over and through her fencing, drifted across 93rd so as to make it impassible, and continued onto the property just across the street and next to my own property.

The Post Office stopped delivering mail to my address and to some others on the route that took them to the impassible sand drifts.

One day a UPS van got stuck and had to be



47513 93rd Street West

Vacated

On a clear, windless day



47513 93rd Street West
From 93rd Street looking southwest
The drifts grew much larger than seen here



47513 93rd Street West
From 93rd Street looking west
On a moderately windy day

towed out of the drifts. On another day a UPS van barreled towards the drifts, took completely to the air, all four wheels airborne, and actually made it to the other side. On other days other vehicles became imbedded in the sand dunes, such as garbage trucks. It became a common sight.

Somewhere through all of this I had heard that many years, like ten or so, before Dust Busters had come out to this area and put into place all the sand catching fences for the very purpose of taking care of a problem that was now repeating itself.

In just ten years, or so, a problem that had been addressed had returned with a vengeance. Poor farming practices, that had created the first dust conditions, returned to the same practices without any mitigating circumstances, such as a living windbreak upwind from the farming and winter cover crops, had not been done.

In fact in surveying the entire west side Antelope Valley there are many areas of barren soil that, with sufficient drought conditions, could very quickly become mini dust bowls that, over time, would grow and be-



UPS truck towed out of drift.



A rapidly spreading Dust Bowl Nucleus
In Antelope Acres at 96th and F
Other potential mini dust bowls exist throughout the area

come major dust bowls. These situations already exist and now we have the added contributing condition of renewable energy's solar facilities.

We have seen the miserable control of dust by AVSR1 and 170th Street West. We also see mass degrada-



tion of the entire facility, which is around 2400 acres. This is one company and we have many. Sunpower is twice the

size. AVSR1 has maintained severe se-



crecy over every aspect of its operations, and



especially of its ground cover and land-



scaping operations. It appears that the company is very single minded and gave not one iota of thought to the real dust problems existing here and was totally unprepared for those conditions. And while this company is totally degrading the land it occupies, it has no sense of obligation to mitigate those conditions and in reality does not even understand

what damages it is doing.

It seems it will require outside pressures to achieve any degree of compliance, yet at times it seems that neither the County of Los Angeles, nor any of its agencies, such as Planning, have any real understandings of the problems nor any will to gain such understanding and pursue some long term, viable solutions.



This is the center of the erosion.
Here everything blew down to hardpan
And the larger pebbles remained behind

And so begins the process of building a large berm and then covering the barren dust blowing areas with



Another potential mini dust bowl
A short distance away
Between F-8 and G almost due south

wood chips shipped by truck and spread by tractor. Spreading by tractor was a slow, costly method that spread the



The Berm Begins
It will stretch from Avenue F to past F-4
Northern View

chips unevenly so in some places they are thick and others they are thin. For large scale spreading perhaps some form of a spreader is available such as those used to spread manure.

There were some problems with the job so it never was completed, yet the intent was accomplished and the mini dust bowl was squelched. Don Newton, with much work, was able to re-



This is part of a large area adjacent, to the south of what was covered, that never was done. Without rain this area may grow just as the first part did.

Taken on 5-9-2012 at 7:23am

cover his property and today it looks like the dust bowl was never there.

Some of the following years had good rain and over some of the less blown areas, with parent plants to the west, some rabbit bush plants sprouted and took hold. A band of younger rabbit bush plants can be seen to the east where the wood chips were laid down in thin layers.

Between the expanding younger rabbit bush plants is mostly bare wood chips with some Russian thistle having, as Russian thistle does, taken hold and will grow even without rain. The wood chips, of course, hold moisture in the soil below the chips.

Mulching in organic farming is a common method used to suppress weeds but primarily is used to retain moisture beneath the mulch. As the



Younger Rabbit Bush
Growing on the edge of older bushes
Taken on 1-19-2013 at 12:10pm



Standing on the berm just off of Avenue F
Looking southwest
Taken on 1-19-2013 at 10:49 pm

period of time. Add to that two consecutive very dry years. Should the drought continue all will get much worse.

Recent high winds blew clouds of fugitive soil, much from AVSR1 still.



The rabbit bush in this area bloomed profusely
While other areas hardly bloomed at all
Taken on 11-13-2012 at 2:32pm

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