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## **\$5 MILLION IN EPA BROWNFIELD GRANTS AWARDED IN LOUISIANA**

**BATON ROUGE** – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) awarded \$5 million to Louisiana entities to facilitate the redevelopment of vacant and underutilized properties into community assets. Grant awards included \$2 million to the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ), \$500,000 to the Baton Rouge City/Parish Planning Commission (BRCPPC), and \$500,000 to the Regional Planning Commission (RPC) for environmental assessment and planning activities. In addition, \$2 million was awarded to the South Central Planning and Development Commission (SCPDC) for the South Louisiana Brownfield Coalition Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund to support environmental cleanup activities. Coalition partners include Acadiana Planning Commission, City of Baton Rouge /Parish of East Baton Rouge, and the City of Lake Charles. All four grants come from EPA’s Brownfields and Land Revitalization Program and are funded through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law/ Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (BIL/IJJA), with a special focus on reaching environmental equity communities.

Dr. Earthea Nance, the Regional Administrator for EPA Region 6, was on hand to present the checks: “Due to the historic Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), EPA can count on many effective partners in Louisiana that understand the value of redevelopment investments for disadvantaged communities. The BIL continues to be an achievement that prioritizes public health in our communities. With this funding, Brownfields programs will now be able to address specific sites that have prevented economic growth for years. EPA remains grateful for our Louisiana partners’ cooperation and for their longstanding mission of protecting human health.”

The federal grants will be used to assess and cleanup potential Brownfields sites throughout Louisiana. Cumulatively, the community-wide assessment grant funds will be used to conduct 75 Phase I and 46 Phase II environmental site assessments. The funding will also go toward the development of 25 cleanup plans and support community outreach activities. Target areas benefitting from the LDEQ grant will be the city of Pineville, the Shreveport Common neighborhood in the Shreveport, and the city of Eunice's downtown district. Priority sites include a 618-acre hospital complex and closed gas stations, historic buildings, former dry cleaners, and former industrial sites throughout all three target areas.

“We are grateful for these grants which will help bring more contaminated properties back into use through assessments and cleanups,” said LDEQ Secretary Dr. Chuck Carr Brown. “By targeting blighted and underserved areas, Brownfields projects put effort and resources where they are most needed.”

Baton Rouge’s assessment grant includes outreach activities in the Mid-City and Scotlandville neighborhoods and the Plank Road corridor – all communities with environmental equity concerns. Priority sites include a former auto repair facility, an 8-acre site where chemical drums were stored, cleaned out and repainted, and a former filling station. “East Baton Rouge is excited to continue our brownfield program and focus our efforts on assessing and restoring contaminated and long vacant properties back into commerce. In partnership with

EPA, we will be able to target the areas of Plank Road, Scotlandville and the Florida Boulevard Corridor to turn blighted and vacant sites into community assets,” said Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome.

RPC’s Executive Director, Jeff Roesel, is excited about their partnership with St. Bernard Parish for Brownfield redevelopment activities: “The Regional Planning Commission is thrilled to be working with our community partners in St. Bernard Parish on this Brownfield assessment award from EPA. This grant will help St. Bernard create jobs, revitalize commercial corridors, and address blighted properties which remain from Hurricane Katrina. While many potential brownfield sites have been identified across the Parish, we hope to focus our efforts on key locations such as the Old Ford Plant, Village Square Shopping Center, and the Paris Road industrial park.”

SCPDC’s Chief Executive Officer, Kevin Belanger, stated: “We are honored to receive Brownfield Revolving Loan Supplemental Funds from EPA that will enable us to sustain a continual source of funding for our successful South Louisiana Brownfields Coalition Revolving Loan Fund Program. The Coalition proposes to use the Supplemental funding to complete the cleanup and remediation of Brownfield sites already in our pipeline, including projects slated to be mixed-use facilities, multi-family homes, commercial spaces, a town hall, and a French Immersion Hub serving as a business incubator and French Cultural Center. Through this award, the pursuit of cleanup planning and implementation will continue throughout the Coalition’s regional area.”

Brownfields sites are vacant and underutilized properties where actual or suspected environmental issues are a barrier to redevelopment. Under the Office of Environmental Assessment’s Remediation Division, LDEQ’s Brownfields Program partners with federal, state and local resources to facilitate the reuse of Brownfields sites throughout the Louisiana. Addressing potential environmental issues, especially financial and regulatory hurdles, is often intimidating and creates a barrier to the redevelopment or expanded use of these sites. LDEQ’s Brownfields Program helps convert these properties from community liabilities into community assets by assisting local governments and communities navigate the environmental process from investigation to cleanup and redevelopment.

Learn more about LDEQ’s Brownfields Program at <https://deq.louisiana.gov/page/brownfields>.

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