EPA Brownfields Program

EPA's Brownfields Program empowers states, communities, and other stakeholders to work together to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields. A brownfield site is real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant. On February 17, 2009, President Barack Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The Recovery Act is an unprecedented effort to jumpstart our economy, and create or save millions of jobs. This law provided stimulus funds to the Brownfields Program to award grants to evaluate and clean up former industrial and commercial sites. Under this law, EPA will provide financial assistance to eligible applicants through four competitive grant programs: assessment grants, revolving loan fund grants, cleanup grants, and job training grants.

Community Description

The City of Rio Dell was selected to receive a brownfields assessment grant. Located in rural Humboldt County, Rio Dell (population 3,200) is a small village adjacent to the Eel River, the third largest watershed in the state and a designated Wild and Scenic River. It also is adjacent to the Scotia Bluffs that contain fossils up to 50 million years old. Despite the city's distinctive culture, location, and history, its residents are experiencing economic stress. The city's unemployment rate is 12.5 percent, and the poverty rate is 23 percent. The median household income is lower than the rest of the county and the state. The city's economic condition can be traced to its history and the decline of the timber industry, which left behind vacant, environmentally degraded brownfields. Contamination from the Eel River Sawmills site has been detected in groundwater. Assessment of the target site is expected to leverage cleanup funds and facilitate its redevelopment and reuse.

Assessment Grant

$350,000 for hazardous substances (Recovery Act Funding)

EPA has selected the City of Rio Dell for a brownfields assessment grant. Site-specific hazardous substances grant funds will be used to conduct Phase I and Phase II environmental site assessments at the former Eel River Sawmills site at 1053 Northwestern Avenue in Fortuna. Prior to 1952, the 45-acre site was used for agricultural purposes. A sawmill then operated on the property from 1958 to 2002. Grant funds also will be used to identify cleanup options and support community outreach activities.

Contacts

For further information, including specific grant contacts, additional grant information, brownfields news and events, and publications and links, visit the EPA Brownfields Web site (http://www.epa.gov/brownfields).

EPA Region 9 Brownfields Team
(415) 972-3091
EPA Region 9 Brownfields Web site
(http://www.epa.gov/region9/brownfields)

Grant Recipient: City of Rio Dell, CA
(707) 764-3532

The information presented in this fact sheet comes from the grant proposal; EPA cannot attest to the accuracy of this information. The cooperative agreement for the grant has not yet been negotiated. Therefore, activities described in this fact sheet are subject to change.