

From Brown to Green

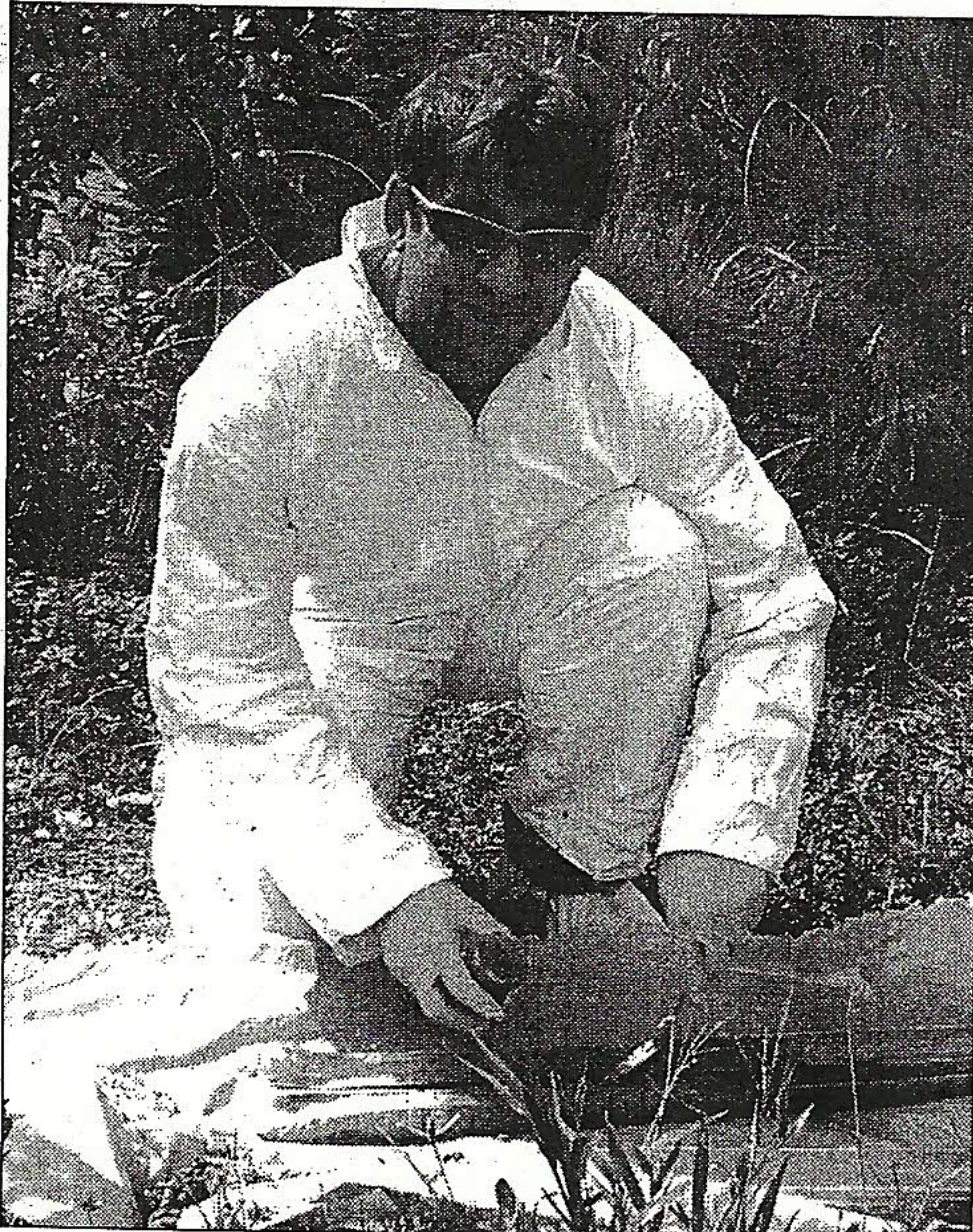
by Christine Laurel

Brownfields – those abandoned gas stations in the middle of town or ancient mills left to decay on the riverbank – what if you could replace these eyesores with viable businesses restoring your town's inner core? Well you can – that's the plan behind the Washington County Council of Government's (WCCOG) brownfields program for which they've just been awarded two \$200,000 grants from the EPA.

A brownfield is a site that has the potential for an environmental hazard, like rusting tanks of gasoline buried under an abandoned gas station that could be leaking petroleum into the groundwater. One of the two EPA grants will finance WCCOG's efforts to assess petroleum contamination at these sites, while the other grant will assess the potential for contamination by other hazardous materials, like Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs), an unfortunate manufacturing byproduct.

Certainly beautifying a community's waterfront or cleaning up an oil spill are beneficial in their own right, but the greater goal of assessing potential contamination is to remove the uncertainty about whether a property is truly contaminated and what the price tag would be to clean it up, explains Judy East, Executive Director of WCCOG. "Removing the uncertainty paves the way for economic development." Perhaps the buried tanks aren't leaking at all, or perhaps there's only minimal contamination that can be easily contained and removed. The assessment will provide answers enabling investors to gage the true cost of moving ahead with plans for developing a languishing downtown site.

Out of the 120 potentially contaminated sites in Washington County, the brownfields project will target those located in the middle of a community's business district "that are prime for re-development." How did we come to this point, where downeast Maine has possibly 120 contaminated locations? "Back in the early days of the EPA in the 1970's and before that time especially, people weren't thinking of environmental issues, so sites like gas stations were not subject to any sort of regulations in terms of environmental protection," explains Jason Langley, a local consulting geologist with Sunrise Environmental LLC. Now, only if a landowner can assure prospective buyers and banks that no environmental hazards stand in the way of developing these sites do these derelict properties have a chance at a second life that will help re-



Geologist Jason Langley collects soil samples at a PCB contaminated site as part of a brownfield assessment in Florida.

talize our rural communities.

The first phase in the assessment process East refers to as the "paper chase." Is there a record of spills? A little detective work and consultation with historians is required to narrow down the list of sites. Then comes the technical phase of the assessment: "putting probes in the ground, monitoring ground water, gathering soil samples... it gets expensive," says East, referencing the need for hydro-geologists and special lab equipment that is not currently available in Washington County.

That's where GEI Consultants, Inc. comes into the picture, a national engineering firm specializing in geotechnical and ecological science, hired by WCCOG through an intensive process scrutinizing the list of candidate firms. East describes the final selection as "one of the most difficult professional decisions I've ever had to make," but feels very confident that GEI, who will be subcontracting local vendors for some of the work, such as surveying, will not only excel in the technical aspects of the site assessments, but also assist in the community education aspect. "I think there's a learning curve as to what the program offers," she says, alluding to the stigma attached to owning a potential brownfield property. Losing the stigma can be accomplished by assessing the problem, estimating the cleanup cost and signing an agreement with Maine's DEP for a voluntary re-

sponse action plan (VRAP) so the cleanup is on record. "But the remediation is when the price tag can really go up," notes Langley, which is why WCCOG will be pursuing additional EPA grants to clean up brownfield sites after the assessment process has been completed.

Stay tuned as *MVNO* tracks where and how the assessment progresses, and for more information visit WCCOG's Brownfield Program page at <http://www.wccog.net/brownfields.html>.

Focus on Energy

by Christine Laurel

The Copenhagen Accord Credited to BASIC and the USA

In part 2 of our 3-part series on the silver lining to the COP15 held in Copenhagen, Denmark last month, we examine the role played by the BASIC group of developing nations along with the US in forging the Copenhagen Accord, and how this represents a positive shift in the US policy toward climate change.

While the Annex B Parties (nations already committed to the Kyoto Protocol) were wringing their hands during the COP15 and angry developing nations stalled talks, rumors that negotiations would completely break down and no agreement would be reached were rampant. Much of the blame was directed at China, now the world's leading exporter, whose consent was imperative to any globally effective talks. As discussed in last week's column, China along with other BASIC nations refused to agree to any binding commitment on mandated GHG reductions and external monitoring of those reductions.

When US President Obama and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao arrived at the COP15 – setting a new precedent for US and Chinese interest in climate talks – they met behind closed doors for one lengthy session, then brought in representatives from the other BASIC nations to reach an agreement that was later recognized by a majority of parties at the COP15 – the "Copenhagen Accord." In effect, the COP15 was saved by some of the parties touted as roadblocks to success only hours earlier.

What's particularly significant about the US-China talks

is that these two nations are the leading GHG polluters. Now that both of these parties are on board, for the first time in history the idea of reducing carbon emissions down to a level where human life is sustainable is more than just a smart idea – it's actually in the works.

How much in the works? The Copenhagen Accord is a set of non-binding (for the most part) statements of belief and intended action. It acknowledges that "climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time," and calls for a concerted effort to retain global warming at no more than 2 degrees Celsius, recognizing that "deep cuts in global emissions are required according to science."

Furthermore, it will take global cooperation to achieve this 2 degree-cap, but "the least developed countries, small island developing States and Africa" will require assistance to make the transition to greener technologies... and not just technical assistance, but financial assistance to the tune of \$100 billion by 2020 – which Secretary Clinton endorsed, in a sense reworking the US Senate's Byrd-Hagel Resolution that required developing nations to match any US commitment to reduce GHGs. Now the US is pledging to assist developing nations reduce GHGs.

As far as external monitoring of carbon reductions, the Accord only requires the Annex B Parties to comply with the Kyoto Protocol levels of cuts and external monitoring. *See Focus on Energy, page 12.....*

DOWNEAST TIDE TABLE FOR WASHINGTON COUNTY

DATES & TOWNS	SUNRISE		HIGH TIDE		LOW TIDE		SUNSET
	AM	PM	hgt	hgt	AM	PM	
Wed., Jan. 13th							
Eastport	7:03	9:20	18.9	9:50 17.5	3:17	1.7 3:49 0.4	4:10
Lubec	7:03	9:18	18.1	9:48 16.8	3:17	1.6 3:49 0.4	4:11
Cutler	7:03	9:10	14.0	9:40 12.9	2:58	1.3 3:30 0.3	4:12
Machiasport	7:04	9:21	13.0	9:51 12.1	3:08	1.2 3:40 0.3	4:13
Jonesport	7:05	9:17	12.2	9:56 10.6	3:08	1.3 3:50 -0.1	4:14
Milbridge	7:06	9:25	11.9	10:04 10.4	3:30	1.1 4:12 -0.1	4:15
Thu., Jan. 14th							
Eastport	7:03	10:04	19.1	10:32 17.7	4:02	1.5 4:31 0.2	4:12
Lubec	7:03	10:02	18.3	10:30 17.0	4:02	1.4 4:31 0.2	4:12
Cutler	7:03	9:54	14.1	10:22 13.1	3:43	1.1 4:12 0.2	4:13
Machiasport	7:04	10:05	13.2	10:33 12.2	3:53	1.0 4:22 0.2	4:14
Jonesport	7:04	10:00	12.2	10:36 10.8	3:52	1.2 4:31 -0.1	4:15
Milbridge	7:05	10:08	11.9	10:44 10.5	4:14	1.0 4:53 -0.1	4:16
Fri., Jan. 15th							
Eastport	7:02	10:45	19.2	11:11 17.9	4:44	1.3 5:10 0.1	4:13
Lubec	7:02	10:43	18.4	11:09 17.2	4:44	1.3 5:10 0.1	4:13
Cutler	7:02	10:35	14.2	11:01 13.2	4:25	1.0 4:51 0.1	4:15
Machiasport	7:03	10:46	13.2	11:12 12.3	4:35	0.9 5:01 0.1	4:15
Jonesport	7:04	10:38	12.2	11:12 10.8	4:32	1.1 5:08 -0.1	4:17
Milbridge	7:05	10:46	11.9	11:20 10.6	4:54	0.9 5:30 -0.1	4:18
Sat., Jan. 16th							
Eastport	7:02	11:24	19.2	11:48 18.0	5:23	1.2 5:48 0.1	4:14
Lubec	7:02	11:22	18.4	11:46 17.3	5:23	1.1 5:48 0.1	4:14
Cutler	7:02	11:14	14.2	11:38 13.3	5:04	0.9 5:29 0.1	4:16
Machiasport	7:03	11:25	13.2	11:49 12.4	5:14	0.8 5:39 0.1	4:16
Jonesport	7:03	11:14	12.2	11:46 10.9	5:09	1.0 5:42 0.0	4:18
Milbridge	7:04	11:22	11.9	11:54 10.6	5:31	0.9 6:04 0.0	4:19
Sun., Jan. 17th							
Eastport	7:01	—	—	12:02 19.1	6:01	1.2 6:24 0.2	4:15
Lubec	7:01	—	—	12:00 18.3	6:01	1.1 6:24 0.2	4:16
Cutler	7:01	11:52	14.1	—	5:42	0.9 6:05 0.2	4:17
Machiasport	7:02	—	—	12:03 13.1	5:52	0.8 6:15 0.2	4:18
Jonesport	7:02	11:49	12.0	—	5:45	1.0 6:14 0.1	4:19
Milbridge	7:04	11:57	11.7	—	6:07	0.9 6:36 0.1	4:20
Mon., Jan. 18th							
Eastport	7:01	12:25	18.1	12:39 18.8	6:39	1.2 7:01 0.5	4:17
Lubec	7:00	12:23	17.3	12:37 18.0	6:39	1.2 7:01 0.4	4:17
Cutler	7:01	12:15	13.4	12:29 13.9	6:20	0.9 6:42 0.3	4:18
Machiasport	7:01	12:26	12.5	12:40 13.0	6:30	0.8 6:52 0.3	4:19
Jonesport	7:02	12:20	10.9	12:25 11.7	6:21	1.1 6:47 0.3	4:20
Milbridge	7:03	12:28	10.7	12:33 11.5	6:43	0.9 7:09 0.3	4:21
Tues., Jan. 19th							
Eastport	7:00	1:02	18.1	1:17 18.4	7:17	1.3 7:38 0.8	4:18
Lubec	7:00	1:00	17.3	1:15 17.7	7:17	1.3 7:38 0.7	4:18
Cutler	7:00	12:52	13.4	1:07 13.6	6:58	1.0 7:19 0.6	4:20
Machiasport	7:01	1:03	12.5	1:18 12.7	7:08	0.9 7:29 0.5	4:20
Jonesport	7:01	12:53	11.0	1:01 11.4	6:58	1.1 7:20 0.5	4:22
Milbridge	7:02	1:01	10.7	1:09 11.1	7:20	1.0 7:42 0.5	4:23

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