

**WASHINGTON COUNTY BROWNFIELDS ASSESSMENT GRANT
REGIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**

December 1, 2009 1:00 – 3:00pm
MacBride Building, DECH, Machias

In Attendance:

Rick Tanney, Trescott
Dick Fickett, Cherryfield
Roger Clapp, Addison
Nick Hodgkins, Maine DEP
Billy Howard, Due East & Downeast LNG
Harold Clossey, Sunrise County Economic Council
Blaine Jones, Bangor Savings Bank
Betsy Fitzgerald, Town of Machias
Lou Esposito, The First (by phone)

Staff:

Judy East, WCCOG
Jeremy Gabrielson, WCCOG
Kate Skinner, GEI
Todd Coffin, GEI

Action items to be completed before the next meeting on Jan 6/10 are in bold italic font.

I. Grant basics

Judy gave an overview of the basic grant requirements. EPA awarded WCCOG \$400k to conduct assessment of brownfields sites in Washington County. Of the total, \$200k is for assessment of sites with petroleum contamination and \$200k for other hazardous materials. WCCOG went under contract with EPA in September. The bulk of the contract will pay for a qualified consultant to conduct the assessments. WCCOG worked with a subcommittee to select a consultant and awarded a three-year, \$350k contract to GEI. We anticipate that work may be completed before the end of 3 years.

II. Roles of Committee, Consultant, EPA and Maine DEP

- a. *Committee* – Judy commented that the Regional Advisory Committee satisfies EPA’s requirement for public involvement. More than that though, WCCOG will be looking to the Regional Advisory Committee for local knowledge so that we can target the site assessment process to make the most effective use of public dollars. Committee members also serve as “ambassadors” for the Brownfields program.
- b. *Consultant* – Todd commented the three primary areas of assistance GEI can provide as the consultant are:
 - i. Site selection and development of inventory of potential sites
 - ii. Site assessment: GEI will perform Phase I and Phase II environmental assessments of the selected properties.
 - iii. Outreach: Assist the committee to bring information about this project to the larger community: service organizations, schools, etc.
- c. *Maine DEP* – Nick commented that the EPA is the grantor and provides oversight through their project; EPA must also review and approve sites selected for assessment.

As the project manager for the State, Nick will review report, do site visits. He will also serve on the Advisory committee and can act as a liaison with EPA as needed.

- d. *Questions* – The Committee had a number of questions regarding liability and the willingness of land-owners to participate in the program. Nick and other responded that under State law, the liability for contamination exists whether it has been quantified or not. This program provides a way to conduct assessment at no cost to the land-owner. In most cases, the type of Phase I and Phase II investigation funded through this program would be required by lenders at the time of transfer. Nick commented that in his experience, when Brownfields advisory committee brainstorm potential sites, there are always some land-owners who want nothing to do with the program; some who immediately recognize the value and want to sign on and the rest are somewhere in the middle. In any event, inclusion of property in the Brownfields assessment program is contingent on land-owner participation. Nick also provided 3 handouts that are available to committee members for outreach. These include:
- DEP Issue Profile – Brownfields Program
 - DEP Issue Profile – Voluntary Response Action Program
 - Site Investigation Matters – Taking the mystery out of dealing with contaminated property in Maine.

Another committee member asked how many sites we can reasonably anticipate assessing with this grant. Judy and others responded that a reasonable estimate is 5 to 10 Phase I assessments (maybe more) and 2 to 4 Phase II assessments. If the program is successful, WCCOG can then apply to EPA for more funding to conduct additional assessments.

III. Site Selection

- a. *Status at priority sites* – Judy and Betsy gave an overview of one site that has already been identified as potential project for this program. The Town of Machias has entered discussions with an interested property owner to redevelop a downtown location as a community plaza. There is a willing land-owner and the Town has identified potential funding source for redevelopment.
- b. *Inventory strategies* – The committee discussed how best to conduct/develop an inventory. The committee decided that we would develop an inventory of potential sites for the committee to consider. Committee members will be asked to bring forward sites that they are aware of. ***WCCOG will also solicit potential sites from town officials and members of the public, through public outreach including a press release, regional organization mailing lists and the WCCOG Brownfields program website.***

The committee agreed that information about potential sites will remain confidential; information about individual properties will be made public when – and only when – we have landowner permission to conduct the assessment.

- c. *Criteria Ranking Matrix* — The committee suggested revisions as reflected in the revised document (*attached*).
- d. *Nomination Form* – The committee review the draft nomination form and agreed that is should be revised. ***Todd agreed and will pull together a scaled-down nomination form and circulate it to the committee.*** Once the committee approves the nomination form, it will be posted on the WCCOG Brownfields Assessment website.

IV. Public outreach approach and outline for draft public participation plan

- a. *Press release.* The committee recommended sending out a press release to solicit nominations for sites to be included in the program. ***Judy/Todd will develop a draft press release and circulate it to the committee before sending it out.***
- b. *Website.* ***Todd will develop a website for the WCCOG Brownfield Assessment program.***
- c. *Targeted outreach.* The Committee discussed ***targeted outreach to stake holder groups*** as a means for promoting the program and soliciting nominations for project sites. In addition to WCCOG member municipalities and the local media, the Committee identified an initial list of groups and publications that we should send the press release directly to. The list includes:
 - i. Machias Savings Bank newsletter for commercial customers
 - ii. Washington/Hancock Board of Realtors
 - iii. County-Wide (newspaper)
 - iv. SCEC’s Local Happenings
 - v. Regional chambers of commerce
 - vi. Maine Land Trust Network & local land conservation groups
 - vii. Local lending institutions, surveyors, and architects

V. Next Steps

The Committee decided to wait until January to make a decision about moving ahead with the Phase I assessment of the nominated site in Machias. The intent is to review and rank multiple sites and select those with the highest ranking for assessment.

The Advisory Committee and staff will come to the next meeting with a preliminary list of potential sites in their area of knowledge and understanding.

Next meeting of the Regional Advisory Committee:

Wednesday, January 6 from 1:00 – 3:00 at the SCEC Conference Room (1 Stackpole Road, Machias).

Attachments:

Revised Criteria Evaluation Form

Respectfully submitted: Jeremy Gabrielson and Judy East, December 2, 2009