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EPA Selects SW Arkansas Planning & Redevelopment District to Receive \$300,000 for Brownfields Assessment

Funds are part of \$65.6 million awarded nationwide

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DALLAS - (May 8, 2020) Today, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is announcing that the Southwest Arkansas Planning and Development District was selected to receive a Brownfields assessment grant for \$300,000. The grant is part of \$65.6 million given nationwide to assess and clean up contaminated properties under the agency's Brownfields Program. Under President Trump's Administration, EPA has delivered approximately \$287 million in Brownfield grants directly to communities and nonprofits for cleanup and redevelopment, job creation, and economic development through the award of 948 grants.

"Abandoned and contaminated properties are not just an issue for cities—these sites burden rural areas as well," said **Regional Administrator Ken McQueen**. "EPA's Brownfields grants offer a jump-start to projects like El Dorado's Hillsboro Street that can help revive entire communities."

"This Brownfields Assessment Grant will channel funding to El Dorado and allow local officials to improve various places in the community," said **Congressman Bruce Westerman (AR-4)**. "EPA has shown a strong commitment to rural economy improvement, and I look forward to continue working with them in areas across Arkansas."

"Today, Southwest Arkansas and the Southwest Arkansas Planning and Development District are celebrating the successful award of an EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant. This project is a continuation of our previous brownfield assessment program," said **Executive Director Renee Dycus**. "We are overjoyed at the selection of our project to be able to continue to address much-needed assessments of Brownfield properties which enables local communities to address potentially contaminated and dilapidated properties and encourage economic growth in our region. We sincerely

thank EPA, the EPA Region 6 team, Terracon (Little Rock Branch), KSU TAB Program, and our local elected officials for their support of this project.”

The Southwest Arkansas Planning and Development District grant will target the city of El Dorado’s Hillsboro Street Gateway Corridor, which is located within a Qualified Opportunity Zone. Priority sites include a former automotive repair and filling station, and a former tractor dealership and repair business that has been abandoned for nearly 35 years.

Nationwide, this year, the agency is announcing the selection of 155 grants for communities and tribes totaling over \$65.6 million in EPA brownfields funding the agency’s Assessment, Revolving Loan Fund, and Cleanup Grant Programs. These funds will aid under-served and economically disadvantaged communities, including neighborhoods located in Opportunity Zones, in assessing and cleaning up abandoned industrial and commercial properties. An Opportunity Zone is an economically distressed community where new investment, under certain conditions, may be eligible for preferential tax treatment. Of the 151 total communities selected, 118 of these communities can potentially assess or clean up brownfield sites in census tracts designated in these zones. In addition, nearly 30% of the communities selected today will receive brownfields funding for the first time.

Grants awarded by EPA’s Brownfields Program provide communities across the country with an opportunity to transform contaminated sites into community assets that attract jobs and achieve broader economic development outcomes, while taking advantage of existing infrastructure. For example, brownfields grants are shown to:

- Increase Local Tax Revenue: A study of 48 brownfields sites found that an estimated \$29 million to \$97 million in additional local tax revenue was generated in a single year after cleanup. This is two to seven times more than the \$12.4 million EPA contributed to the cleanup of these sites.
- Increase Residential Property Values: Another study found that property values of homes near revitalized brownfields sites increased between 5% and 15% following cleanup.

Background

A brownfield is a property for which the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant. There are estimated to be more than 450,000 brownfields in the United States. EPA’s Brownfields Program began in 1995 and has provided nearly \$1.6 billion in brownfield grants to assess and clean up contaminated properties and return blighted properties to productive reuse. To date, brownfields investments have leveraged more than \$31 billion in cleanup and redevelopment. Over the years, the relatively small

investment of federal funding, from both public and private sources, leveraged more than 160,000 jobs.

The next National Brownfields Training Conference will be held on April 26-30, 2021, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Offered every two years, this conference is the largest gathering of stakeholders focused on cleaning up and reusing former commercial and industrial properties. EPA co-sponsors this event with the International City/County Management Association.

List of the FY 2020 applicants selected for funding: <https://www.epa.gov/brownfields/applicants-selected-fy-2020-brownfields-assessment-revolving-loan-fund-and-cleanup-0>

For more on the brownfields grants: <https://www.epa.gov/brownfields/types-brownfields-grant-funding>

For more on EPA's Brownfields Program: <https://www.epa.gov/brownfields>

For more information about EPA's role in Opportunity Zones: <https://www.epa.gov/opportunity-zones>

For information on the studies related to the Brownfields Program's environmental and economic benefits: <https://www.epa.gov/brownfields/brownfields-program-environmental-and-economic-benefits>

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