



Brownfields Basics

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What is a Brownfield?

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines a brownfield as "...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" (Public Law 107-118 (H.R. 2869) - "Small Business Liability Relief and Brownfields Revitalization Act", signed into law January 11, 2002). A brownfield typically is underutilized, idled and/or abandoned property.

Examples of Brownfield Sites

Brownfields sites include abandoned factories and other industrial facilities, service stations, oil storage facilities, dry cleaning businesses and any other business or facility that dealt with hazardous substances, pollutants or contaminants. Mine-scarred lands, properties impacted by asbestos and/or lead based paint, and controlled substances can be brownfields as well.

How many Brownfields are there in the U.S.?

The U.S. Government Accounting Office estimates that there are between 400,000 and 600,000 brownfields throughout the U.S.

What is the EPA Brownfields Program?

EPA's brownfields program started in 1995 with the provision of a small amount of "seed money" to local governments that launched hundreds of 2-year brownfield "pilot" projects. The four main goals of the brownfields program are:

- Protection of the environment by addressing brownfields.
- Promotion of partnerships by enhancing collaboration and communication essential to facilitate brownfields cleanup and reuse.

- Strengthen the marketplace by providing financial and technical assistance to bolster the private market.
- Sustain reuse by redeveloping brownfields to enhance a community's long-term quality of life.

On November 1, 2002, President Bush signed into law the Small Business Liability Relief and Brownfield Revitalization Act, also known as the "Brownfields Law". Under the Brownfields Law EPA expanded its brownfields program considerably and is now providing financial assistance to eligible applicants through 4 competitive grant programs:

- Brownfield Assessment Grants provide monies to inventory brownfields, for planning, environmental assessments and community outreach.
- Brownfields Cleanup Grants provide funding for cleanup of environmentally impacted brownfield properties.
- Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund Grants provide monies to capitalize loans used to clean up brownfield properties.
- Brownfields Job Training Grants provide environmental training for residents of brownfields communities.

In 2008, EPA awarded \$74 million in brownfields grants. Grants are awarded annually to individual communities and coalitions, states, and tribal response programs.

*Information on brownfields programs within individual state environmental state agencies can be obtained at <http://www.smart.org> (go to "Links" on the top toolbar).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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