

Community Revitalization Support from Ohio EPA

May 2003

Ohio's strong industrial history has left a legacy of environmental concerns in many of its communities. Development began to move from cities and villages to suburbs and rural areas, in part, to find properties with fewer potential environmental problems, leaving unused and deteriorating properties behind. As a result, many of Ohio's communities lost tax revenue, jobs and valuable land.

The redevelopment of these vacant or abandoned properties is a key part of many communities' plans for revitalization. This fact sheet is intended to provide local governments with contact information so they can learn how Ohio EPA can assist with the assessment, cleanup, and revitalization of brownfields.

Site Assessment & Brownfield Revitalization

The Site Assessment & Brownfield Revitalization Program (SABR) is a new program to assist communities that want to revitalize properties. SABR provides outreach to communities dealing with blighted and contaminated properties by raising awareness of technical and financial resources for the revitalization of brownfields. The SABR Program serves as the first contact for commu-

nities with questions about brownfields. SABR staff can help define communities' needs and direct them toward the right program or agency to provide technical assistance or funding.

What are Brownfields?

A brownfield is an abandoned, idled or under-used industrial or commercial property where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by known or potential releases of hazardous substances or petroleum. Brownfields may include abandoned factories, warehouses, power plants, dry cleaners, hotels and gas stations.

Technical Assistance

The Voluntary Action Program

The Voluntary Action Program (VAP) was developed to encourage the redevelopment and reuse of property that is contaminated with hazardous substances or petroleum. The VAP allows anyone to volunteer to undertake a cleanup and ensure that it meets environmental standards without direct oversight from Ohio EPA. The VAP relies on expertise in the private sector in

the form of certified professionals and certified laboratories.

When the cleanup is complete, the certified professional issues a No Further Action letter to Ohio EPA for review. Once the Agency determines program standards have been met and that the property is protective of public health, safety and the environment, the volunteer can request a covenant not to sue from Ohio EPA. This covenant protects the property owner or operator and future owners from being legally responsible to the State of Ohio for further investigation and cleanup.

VAP Technical Assistance

Ohio EPA assists volunteers with any questions they have regarding their participation in the VAP. Ohio EPA staff can provide a technical review of reports, assistance with site investigation and assistance with cleanup decisions. When a volunteer requests technical assistance, VAP staff will typically meet with the volunteer and his or her CP to discuss the technical assistance program as it applies to the project, specific technical issues related to the project and field technical assistance for those parties that are interested.

VAP technical assistance can provide general reviews of ground water assessments, risk assessments, operation and maintenance plans and

Phase I and II investigations. Guidance also is provided on legal issues such as VAP eligibility, and deed restriction proposals. VAP staff also provide assistance on quality control issues, including sampling and quality assurance plans; standard operating procedures, methodologies, health and safety issues; compliance issues; and assistance with lab methods and VAP certification issues.

Since the VAP relies on user fees to help support the program, volunteers must pay for Agency assistance. However, U.S. EPA has provided a grant to Ohio EPA that can be used in part to subsidize technical assistance for communities and other government entities. To take advantage of this program, a public entity must submit a letter to Ohio EPA requesting technical assistance. The request must include the name of the property, address, and the latitude and longitude of the property.

Who is eligible for VAP technical assistance?

Any volunteer can seek VAP technical assistance. Only public entities are eligible to apply for subsidies.

Field Technical Assistance

The Site Investigation Field Unit (SIFU) provides services for on-site sampling and assessment assistance, including collection of surface

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soil samples, ground water monitoring well samples, residential well samples, surface water and sediment samples, and ecological assessments. SIFU can perform brownfield site assessments at publicly controlled and held commercial or industrial properties throughout Ohio, and at privately held sites to which a public entity has access. Targeted brownfield assessments and ecological assessments are consistent with American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) and/or Ohio EPA VAP protocol to ensure that environmental data collected will be admissible under any state or federal program evaluating the information.

SIFU can provide many innovative site assessment services. SIFU maintains and operates a truck-mounted Geoprobe® unit for use in soil and ground water investigations, as well as a mobile laboratory unit that allows field screening for metals and organics. As data is generated, it is downloaded to a computer for site mapping with real-time global positioning system (GPS) locations. A final report is produced after quality assurance and control samples are compared to field screening data points. This capability of on-site environmental analysis can provide the necessary information to perform a more complete site characterization and investigation in a single mobilization. This innovative approach substan-

tially increases the efficiency of investigative resources.

SIFU also can use its Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and GPS capabilities to map and interpret past and present land uses. Site assessment activities can include workplan and health and safety plan development; environmental sampling; and technical review with final report evaluation.

Who may use SIFU's services?

Public entities interested in the assessment or cleanup of a potentially contaminated property can request SIFU's services, regardless of whether they intend to take the property through the VAP. Public entities also are eligible to request free, grant-subsidized work from SIFU.

Financial Assistance

A number of grants and loans are available at both the state and federal levels to assist in the cleanup of contaminated properties. Some of these are listed below.

Clean Ohio Fund

These funds are administered by the Ohio Department of Development in consultation with Ohio EPA. The Clean Ohio Revitalization Fund provides up to \$40 million in grants

and loans annually in a competitive process to be used for the cleanup of brownfields. Each project can receive up to \$3 million for remediation. The Clean Ohio Assistance Fund provides up to \$10 million annually for projects in distressed areas, and can be used for assessment, cleanup, or public health projects.

Ohio Water Pollution Control Loan Fund

The Ohio Water Pollution Control Loan Fund (WPCLF) is administered by Ohio EPA's Division of Environmental and Financial Assistance. Any environmental investigation or remediation that will result in benefits to surface and/or ground water quality is eligible for WPCLF financing. The WPCLF will provide up to \$3 million to a project for these eligible activities.

U.S. EPA Brownfield Pilot Assessment and Revolving Loan Fund Grants

U.S. EPA awards grants approximately once a year to communities with brownfield revitalization needs. Pilot assessment grants are generally around \$200,000 and can be used for assessment work and community outreach in brownfield communities. Revolving loan funds provide approximately \$500,000 to \$1 million to communities to capitalize revolving loan funds for

brownfield cleanup activities. Other federal money may be available for brownfield revitalization through Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Department of Justice and other federal agencies.

Who is eligible for financial assistance?

The Clean Ohio Fund, Ohio Water Pollution Control Loan Fund and U.S. EPA Brownfield Pilot Assessment and Revolving Loan Fund are available only to public entities, which may be cities, villages, townships, counties, port authorities and conservancy districts. Clean Ohio Funds are not available to any entity that caused or contributed to the contamination of the site; Clean Ohio Assistance funds are available only to communities in priority investment areas.

How Do I Learn More?

For questions regarding brownfields technical support or financial resources, please contact the SABR staff:

Jessica Page
(614) 644-3749

Tiffani Robinson
Manager
(614) 644-3538
