

Berkshire Brownfields Program

BRPC has managed a regional brownfields assessment program for the past four years. Brownfields are properties which are suspected of being contaminated by petroleum or hazardous substances. Suspected contamination means that buyers or redevelopers may be reluctant to invest in a property until they understand the level of contamination and can make an informed business decision.

BRPC received an EPA petroleum assessment grant in 2005. That \$100,000 allowed four Phase I assessments to be performed in Becket, Dalton, Lee and Pittsfield. Two Phase II assessments, which typically are very costly, were also completed, both in Pittsfield. In 2006, BRPC was awarded \$100,000 for hazardous assessments. That funding was used for four Phase I assessments in Adams, Williamstown, and Pittsfield (2), and three Phase II assessments, in Adams and Pittsfield (2). In 2007, BRPC was awarded the largest EPA grant in the New England region, for \$1.4 million. This is split into \$200,000 each for petroleum and hazardous site Assessments and \$1 million for a revolving loan fund (RLF) for site clean-ups. Most of the additional hazardous assessment funds are obligated for three projects, two in Pittsfield and one in Adams. A portion of the petroleum assessment funds have been obligated, but applications for additional assessment work are welcomed, particularly if petroleum is suspected as a (not necessarily the only) contaminant. The RLF is being set-up and should be in operation by the end of June.

BRPC Contact: *Nat Karns*

Online Flood Insurance Maps

A FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) is a map of a community that shows flood hazard areas and risk zones, such as 100-year floodplains. FIRMs are used as the basis for flood insurance rates, as well as many towns' floodplain overlay districts. In the past, FIRMs could only be obtained from FEMA in paper form for a fee. Now "FIRMettes," full-scale segments of FIRMs, can be created online for free. FIRMettes are useful for homeowners, developers, and local officials. Visit www.fema.gov/hazard/map/firm to learn more about FIRMettes.

Growth District Initiative

Governor Patrick recently announced the Growth Districts Initiative to create an inventory of development-ready sites for new and expanding businesses. Growth Districts are areas that municipalities identify for significant new commercial, residential or mixed-use growth. Eligible areas will:

- Be zoned and planned to reflect market conditions and flexibility and to enable proposals to obtain permits within 6 months
- Fit appropriately into the neighborhood context and support or revitalize existing uses and structures within the community
- Be located on previously disturbed lands and not be sited on environmentally significant areas
- Be supported by existing transportation infrastructure, or reasonable upgrades, especially public transit
- Be supported by existing water, sewer and other utility infrastructure or reasonable upgrades
- Create employment in communities or regions in particular need of additional job opportunities
- Include new "workforce housing" or "starter home" opportunities
- Employ good, energy efficient design and include green building and low impact technology



Under this initiative, the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development will partner with municipalities to make the districts "development ready" with respect to local and state permitting, site preparation (including brownfields remediation), infrastructure improvements, and marketing.

Sixteen total locations will be identified on an on-going basis, with already announced Districts include Innovation Square in Worcester, Chicopee River Business Park in Chicopee, and a site in Haverhill.

State Contact: April Anderson Lamoureux at (617) 788-3667

Rest of River PCB Cleanup

An informal public comment period on GE's plans to clean-up PCB's from the Housatonic River below the confluence of the East and West Branches and areas downstream will end on May 20. Proposed BRPC comments will be presented at the May 15th Commission meeting. In staff's opinion, minimal amount of clean-up is being proposed that will not meet objectives to make the Housatonic River somewhat safer for fish consumption and wildlife, while minimizing clean-up costs. Concentrations of contaminated sediments will remain behind every dam below Pittsfield, negatively impacting efforts to maintain, eliminate, or convert dams for hydro-electric generation. GE's Corrective Measures Study is available at: www.epa.gov/ne/ge. Comments may be submitted to:

Susan Svirsky (svirsky.susan@epa.gov), EPA Rest of River Project Manager, c/o Weston Solutions, 10 Lyman Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201

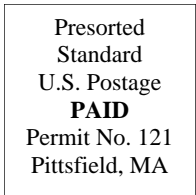
TIP Amendments

BRPC is amending FY2008 projects that are within the 2007-2010 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP is a prioritized multi year plan for transportation rehabilitation, construction projects and transit operations in the Berkshires, and is updated yearly. Amendments include:

- Add funding for paving projects along Route 7 (Lee/Lenox/Stockbridge in 2008 and Lanesborough in 2011)
- Move a Sandisfield bridge rehabilitation project from 2009 to 2008
- Delay a Washington bridge replacement project from 2008 to future year
- Add Western MA Scenic Byways Marketing earmark in 2008
- Add two bike path projects; northerly extension of the Ashuwillticook in Adams, and one in Lenox
- Add earmark for Pittsfield Downtown Streetscape Improvements

The TIP is available for public review on the BRPC website. Comments on the 2007-2010 TIP Amendments are due by Friday, May 23rd.

BRPC Contact: *Alison Church*



Databook Updates

BRPC is in the process of updating the Berkshire County Databook. Published in 2001, the databook contains a variety of information on the demographics, economics, geography, and government of Berkshire County. The new "Data Profile"

Commission Meeting Recap

Seventeen Berkshire Communities were represented at the March 20 full commission meeting. Delegates and alternates were informed of the status of bike path planning efforts across the County as part of the Vermont to Connecticut bike

DCR Heritage Landscape Inventory Program

Staff from the Department of Conservation & Recreation will present a program to work with communities in assessing their heritage landscapes at the May 15th BRPC meeting. This program has been successfully used in various areas in eastern Massachusetts but is just being introduced in western Mass. The initiative builds upon prior efforts to identify, document and protect the heritage landscapes that are vital to the history, character and quality of life of our communities. The intent of the program is to increase awareness about the many different types of heritage landscapes and to help communities and regional partners plan for their preservation.

BRPC Contact: *Nat Karns*

Meetings and Events

May 5	Executive Committee Meeting	3:45 p.m.	BRPC
May 15	Full Commission Meeting	7:30 p.m.	BRPC
May 28	MPO Meeting	4:00 p.m.	BRPC
May 29	"5th Thursday" Dinner	5:30 p.m.	Mazzeo's, Pittsfield
June 4	Executive Committee Meeting	3:45 p.m.	BRPC

includes new and updated information from the US Census Bureau, and various state and regional agencies. The Data Profile will not be released in published form, but is available at www.berkshireplanning.org/data. The site will be updated as new information becomes available.

BRPC Contact: *Sarah Izatt*

Online Mapping

BRPC has created online maps to provide assistance to our communities. These maps allow for interactive viewing of many features and elements that citizens and local officials typically request. A traffic count map is currently available online. This map provides information on the location of all BRPC, MassHighway, and private traffic counts that have taken place in the Berkshires. Additional maps, including transportation, infrastructure, MEPA reviews, natural resources, and land use will become available over the coming months. The maps can be found at: www.berkshireplanning.org/11/online_mapping.

BRPC Contact: *Mark Maloy*

path. Paths are in planning or discussion stages in many communities, including Lenox, Pittsfield, North Adams and Williamstown. Meeting attendees were also provided with sample administrative rules and regulations that can be adopted by planning boards and zoning boards of appeals to clarify procedures. Information about these projects can be found on BRPC's website. Delegates and alternates were also briefed on the framework for the "Land Use Partnership Act," the latest legislative initiative towards state zoning reform, and were informed of the roles and responsibilities of BRPC's Regional Issues Committee. Meetings of the BRPC and its subcommittees are open to the public, please visit www.berkshireplanning.org for dates and agendas.

Clearinghouse Reviews

- North Adams Plaza Redevelopment (North Adams)
- Reservoir Road Improvements (North Adams)
- Ashmere Lake Dam Repairs (Hinsdale)

Commission Development Committee

The Commission Development Committee is one of BRPC's six standing committees. It considers Commission education, membership, structure and process, including periodic evaluation of the Commission's performance. It also recommends training topics for Commission meetings. Periodically, the Committee reviews the Commission's bylaws, the most recent review completed last summer. It also forms a nominating subcommittee that recommends slates of officer candidates, and is responsible for coordinating the highly successful "5th Thursday" Planning Dinners. The Committee has been meeting prior to the regular Commission meetings and will likely need additional members in the upcoming fiscal year. BRPC Contact: *Tom Matuszko*

