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Berkshire Brownfields Program Marks 20th Anniversary with \$3.5 Million Infusion for its Revolving Loan Fund

The award is one of three major grants in Berkshire County

Pittsfield, MA -- Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) is pleased to announce \$3.5 million in supplemental funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to re-capitalize its existing Brownfield Revolving Loan Fund. The EPA has previously provided \$7.6 million in RLF funds to the program. BRPC was selected to receive additional funds because it has a high-performing RLF program with significantly depleted funds due to frequent activity. The RLF program has successfully made loans or subgrants, leading to 12 cleanup projects that are either completed or in progress.

"The Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund is a critical economic development tool in our region," states BRPC Executive Director Tom Matuszko. "In many cases, we're filling gaps in a project's financing that makes it possible to expand or redevelop locations that then provide housing or employment opportunities where they are most needed."

The fund lends to private, public, and non-profit entities for cleanup activities at sites contaminated by petroleum or other hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants. Municipalities and non-profits may also be eligible for subgrants from the fund, usually after participating in a phased brownfield assessment program also operated by BRPC.

According to BRPC's Environmental and Energy Program Manager Melissa Provencher, "Our Assessment Program lifts the veil of uncertainty from sites, offering answers regarding levels of contamination and in some fortunate cases, proving that no contamination exists, encouraging private investment and reuse of a site."

Additional Berkshire County grants were awarded to projects in North Adams and include \$1.9 million to clean up the former Tannery Dump located on Ashton Avenue and \$1.863 million for cleanup at the Greylock Flume property. The tannery dumping site contains a 1.5-acre, 10-foot-high mound of leather scraps that abuts the Hoosic River and is contaminated with heavy metals. Extreme storms have exposed the layers of leather on the riverbank. The flume property is located on State Road, a 7.8-acre former textile mill location that housed ten above-ground storage tanks and 30 former dip tank drums. It is contaminated with sulfuric acids, phosphoric acid, sodium hydroxide, nitric acid, metals, PCBs, and inorganic contaminants. BRPC staff provided assistance in preparing applications for both site-specific awards and will serve as grant manager for the Tannery site project.

About the Berkshire Brownfields Program: The Berkshire Brownfields Program was created in 2004 when BRPC received its first grant from the US Environmental Protection

Agency (EPA) to conduct Environmental Site Assessments (ESA) at Brownfields sites. Since then, the Berkshire Brownfields Program has grown to include an Assessment Program for Phase I & II ESAs and Site Reuse & Cleanup Planning, a Revolving Loan Fund for Brownfields Cleanups, and site-specific Cleanup Projects. For more information, please visit www.berkshireplanning.org/initiatives/berkshire-brownfields-program/

About BRPC: Berkshire Regional Planning Commission is the regional planning agency for Berkshire County, Massachusetts. It provides comprehensive planning services to municipalities, including land use, transportation, community and economic development, housing, public health, and environmental planning. BRPC promotes regional collaboration among communities and works to increase coordination between all levels of government. For more information about BRPC, please visit www.berkshireplanning.org.

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