

Remarks by Susan Bodine
2008 Brownfields Conference Plenary Session
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Detroit, Michigan

Welcome, everyone, to the 2008 national brownfields conference.

Over the past year I've met personally with many of you, both in Washington and in your communities. And I've looked forward to meeting with all of you here in Detroit. This city is world famous for its auto show, and Detroit residents are proud of their automobile-making heritage. Vehicle production is an integral part of the city's economy, infrastructure, and character. And while the industry has left behind some older, obsolete factories, all of us are here today to help turn these problem properties back into community assets.

That's what the brownfields program is doing all across America. It's taking problem properties and turning them back into economic and environmental assets. And I'm pleased that EPA can be a partner in this effort.

When President Bush came into office, he charged EPA with accelerating the pace of environmental progress, while maintaining our nation's economic competitiveness. This goal has been viewed by some as a source of conflict. But at EPA we see it as a source of cooperation. And instead of being a hurdle to economic growth, improving environmental quality can spur economic growth if all of us – government, individuals, and industry – work together to find innovative solutions to our environmental challenges.

I can't think of a better example of this linkage between environmental protection and economic growth than EPA's brownfields program. It's a collaborative program that forges strong public-private partnerships, while promoting innovative and creative solutions to some of the nation's most pressing environmental challenges.

Over the past few months I've traveled across the country announcing good news to brownfields communities. In March I announced this year's round of job training grants in New Orleans, where EPA joined with Goodwill Industries and Southern University to celebrate their selection as two of the new job training grant recipients. Under the brownfields job training program, EPA helps provide community residents with the skills needed to revitalize their own neighborhoods. We have a new report available at the conference that highlights the benefits of this program.

Then in April I traveled to Covington, KY, to announce that city's selection as one of our new brownfields cleanup grantees – one of the more than 200 recipients who received more than \$74 million to assess and clean up brownfields. States and tribes are at the forefront of brownfields cleanup and reuse, and this year we'll be awarding almost \$50 million to states and tribes to support their response programs.

EPA recently announced four new Technical Assistance to Brownfields (TAB) grants, providing about \$1.6 million to fund organizations that can give communities the help they need to keep their brownfields projects on track. The TAB grantees are here at the conference, so be sure to talk to the organization working in your area.

For training, research, and technical assistance we plan to award about \$2 million this year to agencies and organizations to support brownfields communities. The focus of these grants will be sustainable reuse, incorporation of green energy, equitable redevelopment, and public health. Applications were due May 1, and as soon as this conference is over we will get to work reviewing and selecting new projects.

In addition, we're rolling out a new initiative called Brownfields Sustainability Pilots to encourage brownfields cleanup and redevelopment projects that are

“greener” across the board. We’ll be looking for brownfields projects that not only clean up contaminated land, but bring air and water quality benefits as well. EPA has asked each regional office to propose one or more projects that are nearing the point of redevelopment, and that would benefit from additional technical assistance related to the sustainable reuse of the site. The pilots will specifically focus on planning a reuse that will be sustainable and protective of the site cleanup. EPA will devote approximately \$500,000 dollars to support the sustainability pilots. We expect to announce selected pilots in June.

Two weeks ago we released a report titled: “Green Remediation: Incorporating Sustainable Environmental Practices into Remediation of Contaminated Sites.” I invite you all to read it and consider if any of the ideas discussed there could be applied at your brownfields.

This conference also provides a wealth of opportunities to learn how to make revitalization projects greener and more sustainable. There are panels on green buildings and smart growth planning, green remediation and construction methods, and materials recycling. Please attend as many as you can.

We’ve also been promoting successful ways of cleaning up and redeveloping contaminated properties being kept off the market – also known as “mothballed properties.” We’ll soon be putting out a new report on mothballed properties. If you’re facing these issues in your community, I urge you to look at the report when it comes out, and attend the mothballed properties panel session at this conference.

We’re undertaking a few other initiatives that will be of interest to you. We’ll be implementing our Environmental Justice Action Plan that provides targeted funding to environmental justice communities through the CARE grant program. And to strengthen local expertise and involvement in brownfields, this

year we've expanded our outreach to groups such as lenders and local government lawyers.

As our nation faces rising energy prices and increased security concerns related to dependence on foreign sources of oil, EPA's cleanup programs are part of the national effort to find clean, reliable, and renewable sources of energy. We're assessing our nation's portfolio of contaminated lands, from large Superfund sites to abandoned mine lands, as potential places to site large renewable energy production facilities. Our goal is to redevelop those lands that may not have other development options.

A good example is the former Bethlehem Steel site in Lackawanna, NY. It's been turned into a 20 megawatt wind farm with enough capacity to power 7,000 homes. A former Superfund site in Rhode Island is being considered for an eight megawatt solar electric generating facility.

This creative use of these large sites is another example of what I think is one of the exciting things happening at EPA today: the integration of renewable resources, energy efficiency, green buildings, and other environmentally protective ideas into our traditional site cleanup programs. In this way, cleaning up contaminated land can contribute to multiple environmental benefits in the air and water as well. I also invite you to attend tomorrow's panel session on Siting Renewable Energy on Contaminated Lands and Mining Sites. It's scheduled for 1:15, and it will be moderated by OSWER's Associate Assistant Administrator Scott Sherman.

As you spend the next two days here in the Cobo Center, you'll see a lot of familiar sights. The Phoenix Awards, for example, will recognize the best brownfields projects from across the country. And in the Exhibit Hall businesses, nonprofits, and government agencies alike are showcasing their role in urban redevelopment.

But some things are different. This year's conference features more than 300 exhibitors – an all time high. And not only will it be one of the biggest, this brownfields conference will also be one of the “greenest.”

As you can imagine, a conference of this size consumes an enormous amount of energy through facility heating and cooling, waste collection and disposal, and transportation. So, for the first time ever, the brownfields conference is striving to be carbon neutral. With assistance from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Holland+Knight, and URS Corporation, Brownfields 2008 is offsetting its carbon footprint and environmental impact by purchasing carbon offsets from NativeEnergy. NativeEnergy helps finance and build new, clean, and renewable energy projects that help create sustainable economic benefits for Native Americans, Alaska Native villages, and other local communities. Additionally, Brownfields 2008 and NativeEnergy have teamed up to allow attendees the opportunity to purchase carbon offsets for their travel, while also supporting worthwhile sustainability projects.

In EPA's brownfields program we pay a lot of attention to the specific concerns in your communities. And one of the concerns we've heard – particularly in this part of the country – is the legacy of former auto sector properties. I'm pleased that representatives from the major automakers have joined us today. And tomorrow there will be an opportunity to hear from them about auto sector revitalization.

In the meantime, I am proud to announce the availability of a new EPA report on the auto sector. “Shifting Gears – Driving Toward Auto Sector Property Revitalization” is a collaborative effort by EPA, auto manufacturers, developers, environmental professionals, and state and local government officials. The report features projects such as the GM assembly plant in Baltimore, Maryland, where a

streamlined approval process and materials recycling accelerated cleanup and redevelopment of a closed plant into the new Chesapeake Commerce Center.

The report also tells the story of the Allen Park Project in Allen Park, Michigan. This 2007 Phoenix Award winner was a manufacturing waste landfill before the Ford Motor Company – with help from the state of Michigan and the local community – converted it into the Fairlane Green retail center. When fully completed, the center will generate more than 2,000 jobs and provide retail and recreational outlets for area residents.

This project is truly putting both people and property back to work. I hope you take a look at this report and find inspiration for revitalizing former auto sector properties in your community.

I encourage all of you to keep up the good work and continue to build the momentum for local redevelopment. And I urge you to take advantage of this unique opportunity to learn from each other. Today and tomorrow this convention center will be home to a vast amount of knowledge, experience, and resources. Working together, we have turned thousands of problem properties back into community assets. By continuing this successful partnership, I am confident we can tackle many more.

Before closing, we have one major piece of business to complete, and I am very proud – and honored – to be a part of it. A few minutes ago, I mentioned some of the ways that this brownfields conference is different from the earlier ones. There is one further difference. I have been asked to present the President's National Volunteer Service award to two people who have been exemplary models of what volunteer service is all about.

It is most appropriate that the awards are being given here. Both of the recipients worked in Detroit. And both spent countless hours cleaning up and

rebuilding their neighborhoods, bringing new joy to old communities, and helping to revitalize the local economy.

Please give a big round of applause to today's recipients of the President's Volunteer Service Award: Mary Simpson and Harold Ellis. They are two remarkable volunteers who have helped to revitalize and improve their neighborhoods through the Oakman Boulevard Community Association. Their accomplishments span over a number of years. They were nominated by Focus: HOPE, which is a 40-year-old nationally recognized civil and human rights organization in Detroit, and which has a community and economic development program. Mary and Harold, will you please join me on stage?

Mrs. Simpson is creative and resourceful in serving her community and in solving community environmental problems. She is a former employee with the city of Detroit with a master's degree in social work from Wayne State, and she has been involved in neighborhood cleanup, revitalization, and community development efforts. To address dumping in the neighborhood, Mrs. Simpson led a campaign for a small park with landscaping. Annually she helps to organize local residents for the city's Motor City Makeover, targeting eyesores and coordinating event logistics with hundreds of volunteers. She led a local campaign to clean up an alley and vacant lot behind a local fast food restaurant. She has also been involved in recycling drives, greening/beautification efforts, and has been an active member of the Oakman Boulevard Community Association for 30 years.

Mr. Ellis is a true rock in the Focus: HOPE community. He is a retired Detroit school teacher and administrator and is also actively involved in combating blight as a member of the Oakman Boulevard Community Association and the Greater Mid-Detroit/Highland Park Community Development Council. He is a founding member of a revitalization committee that worked to build a playscape and basketball court at the nearby Ford-Lasalle playground. He takes responsibility for

mowing the grass and has been involved in a number of community cleanups at the park. Mr. Ellis is also vice-president of the board of the Village of Oakland Manor, a new 55 unit senior residence in a neighborhood that has seen little development in decades. He has also worked with the Metropolitan Detroit Pond and Garden Club, leading tours of ponds and gardens in Detroit.