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LDEQ receives Brownfields grant from EPA

BATON ROUGE – The Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Office of Brownfields & Land Revitalization has announced that the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) has been awarded an \$800,000 Brownfield Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund grant.

“LDEQ is excited to be selected for an EPA Brownfield Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund award. This funding will allow us to continue to support environmental cleanups that facilitate the reuse of vacant and abandoned properties throughout the state. The Brownfield program has a great record of successes with projects in urban areas such as the Rose Collaborative in New Orleans. We want to do more, especially in our target areas of Shreveport Common, the historic downtowns of Monroe and West Monroe and small communities such as Arabi. I am very pleased and gratified to be able to continue this impressive work in Louisiana,” LDEQ Secretary Dr. Chuck Carr Brown said.

The award is the result of a competitive application process in which EPA sent out a Request for Applications for Brownfield assessment, cleanup and revolving loan fund grants last October, according to LDEQ Brownfield statewide coordinator Rebecca Otte. She added that this is a nationwide competition open to government and nonprofit entities. Over 400 funding applications were submitted from across the country. Of the 155 grants selected by EPA, only 13 were Brownfield Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund grants.

“I am proud of the work the LDEQ Office of Assessment did in putting together this grant application,” LDEQ Assistant Secretary for Assessment Roger Gingles said. “This grant will enable us to continue our Brownfields vision for Louisiana. It’s exciting.”

The grant will be used to capitalize a revolving loan fund from which LDEQ will provide loans and sub-grants to support cleanup activities. Grant funds also will be used to market the revolving loan fund program and support community outreach activities. Revolving loan fund activities will focus on sites throughout the state including three main target areas impacted by major flooding events and the petroleum industry downturn: The Historic Ouachita Riverfront; Shreveport Common; and Arabi Riverfront. Priority sites in these target areas include Louisiana's first Coca-Cola bottling facility, a former hospital, an underground storage tank facility, an abandoned warehouse and auto repair shop, and a former Ford Model T manufacturing facility designed by Albert Kahn. The Shreveport Common and Arabi Riverfront target areas are located in Qualified Opportunity Zones.

“LDEQ is thrilled with this award to revive our Brownfield Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund and provide much-needed funding to cleanup vacant properties to facilitate their redevelopment. We look forward to continuing our partnership with EPA and local Brownfield Programs at the Regional Planning Commission, the city of Shreveport, and the Monroe/West Monroe/Ouachita Parish Brownfield Coalition as well as small communities throughout the state to fully utilize this funding to support local revitalization efforts,” Otte said. “We’ll now work with EPA on the cooperative agreement paperwork. The project period is expected to start Oct. 1, 2020. We anticipate having the loan program set up by March 2021.”

EPA's Brownfields Program empowers states, communities, and other stakeholders to work together to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields. A brownfield site is 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.

The Small Business Liability Relief and Brownfields Revitalization Act of 2002, as amended by the Brownfields Utilization, Investment and Local Development Act of 2018, was passed to help states and communities around the country clean up and revitalize brownfield sites. Under this law, EPA provides financial assistance to eligible applicants through five competitive grant programs: Multipurpose Grants, Assessment Grants, Revolving Loan Fund Grants, Cleanup Grants, and Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training Grants. Additionally, funding support is provided to state and tribal response programs through a separate mechanism.

