

Conservation Committee Report

Volume 13 Issue 6

June 2011



The Conservation Pledge

I give my pledge as an American to save and faithfully defend from waste, the natural resources of my country; the soil, the water, the air, the minerals, the plant life and the wildlife.

This is my Pledge!

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Rep. Ross Announces Bill To Expand Solar Energy Mandate In PA

Rep. Chris Ross (R-Chester), with the support of the PA Solar Energy Industries Association and others, introduced a new legislation-- House Bill 1580 (not yet online)-to fix the crippled solar energy credits market in Pennsylvania.

“The solar energy industry in Pennsylvania is in a state of crisis right now,” says Rep. Ross. “The recent success of the solar grant programs in Pennsylvania has overwhelmed the Solar Renewable Energy Credit market. Now, the grants have

been allocated, and there have been twice as many credits created than are needed for the next couple of years. Unless we do something promptly, the recent solar boom in Pennsylvania, which brought in hundreds of companies and thousands of jobs, will turn into a bust. I am hearing from many solar companies that are making plans to pull out of Pennsylvania due the solar credit market crash. My legislation is designed to get the demand for solar credits back into line

with the supply, and thereby stabilize the marketplace.”

This bill will increase the solar share only in the years 2012 through 2015 so the amount of solar energy that is required to be purchased by utilities more closely matches the growth in solar supply. Currently, utility companies are only obligated to purchase 0.5 percent of their total energy supply from solar by the year 2021.

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Penncrest High School Wins 2011

Pennsylvania Envirothon

Penncrest High School in Delaware County took home first place honors in the 2011 Pennsylvania Envirothon this week at Susquehanna Univer-

sity and Shikellamy State Park. Rounding out the top 10 teams were:

-- York Homeschoolers, York County;

-- Blue Mountain High School, Schuylkill County;

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Expand Solar Energy Mandate In PA (continued)

In contrast, the requirement for Delaware is 3.5 percent, Maryland is 2 percent, and New Jersey is 3 percent.

“It is critical that we pass this bill so we can build on the success of the solar energy industry in Pennsylvania,” says Ron Celentano, President of PASEIA. “Too much has been invested and too many jobs are at risk.” Maureen Mulligan, Government Relations Director of PASEIA, adds, “The solar share requirement for Pennsyl-

vania’s utility companies needs to be aligned with the supply of solar.”

Source: PA Environment Digest



Penncrest High School Wins (continued)

-- Carmichaels Area High School, Greene County;

-- MMI Preparatory, Luzerne County;

-- Bald Eagle High School, Centre County;

-- Warren Area High School, Warren County;

-- Oley Valley High School, Berks County;

-- Emmaus High School, Lehigh County; and

-- Palmyra High School, Lebanon County.

The Pennsylvania Envirothon awarded scholarships to the first, second, and third place teams. The scholarships were sponsored by The Hershey Company and

EXCO Resources (PA). Each of the top ten teams received a plaque and other prizes.

The 2011 Pennsylvania Envirothon champions will represent the Commonwealth at the 24th Canon Envirothon North American competition planned for July 24 – 29 at Mount Allison Uni-

versity, Sackville, New Brunswick, Canada.

Pennsylvania has won the North American event in 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1994, 1997, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2005, and 2009.

More than 45 states, eight Canadian provinces, and one Canadian territory have initiated Envirothon contests based on the

program that was originally developed by Pennsylvania’s conservation districts.

During the Envirothon, five-member teams participate in a series of field-oriented tests that

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Penncrest High School Wins (continued)

focus on five topic areas – soils and land use, aquatic ecology, forestry, wildlife, and environmental issues. The 2011 current environmental issue was salt and fresh water estuaries.

The teams also prepare and deliver oral presentations to panels of judges who evaluate each team on its problem-solving capabilities, oral presentation skills and recommendations to help solve the specific environmental challenge, which usually relates

to the current environmental issue.

Teams participating represent the best and the brightest of the thousands of high school teens who have competed in county Envirothon competitions sponsored by conservation districts across the state.

At the state level, the Envirothon is sponsored by Pennsylvania's sixty-six conservation districts, the State Conservation Commis-

sion, and the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts. The program is managed by a board of directors representing those sponsors.

Technical expertise is provided by the following agency partners: Department of Environmental Protection, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Game Commission, Fish and Boat Commission, the U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Canon Envirothon.

Sponsors of the 2011 Envirothon are EXCO Resources (PA), The Hershey Company, PPL Corporation, Air Products Foundation, Nestle Water North America, Bayer HealthCare, Canon Envirothon, PA Trappers Association, PA Outdoor Writers Association, Sean Reineke Family, Fulton Co. Commissioner Cutchall, Larson Design

Group, Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts, State Conservation Commission, and the PA Growing Greener Program.

The Hershey Company, Dwight Lewis Lumber, Lewis Lumber Products, and Cargill are "Corporate Station Sponsors."

For more information on the Envirothon program, contact your county conservation district or contact the Pennsylvania Envirothon by phone 814-623-7900 ext. 111, send email to: paenvirothon@pennswoods.net, or visit the PA Envirothon website.

Source: PA Environment Digest



Sportsmen Announce New Alliance To Protect Sporting In Marcellus Shale Region

As Marcellus Shale gas development increases at a rapid pace and scale across northern Appalachia, sportsmen and women in the region have joined forces and created an alliance to urge state and federal agencies and the energy industry to protect long-held hunting, fishing and trapping traditions.

The Sportsmen Alliance for Marcellus Conservation is an affiliation of sportsmen and women working together to identify and mitigate the impacts

of Marcellus Shale gas drilling on hunting, fishing, trapping and other outdoor sporting activities.

“While there have been many concerns expressed about Marcellus Shale gas development, the voices of sportsmen and women are beginning to emerge in the public dialogue,” said Katy Dunlap, Eastern Water Project Director for Trout Unlimited. “A number of key organizations have joined forces to give sportsmen and women an opportunity to be heard—so that to-

gether we can advocate for common sense policies and practices to ensure that Marcellus Shale gas development does not negatively impact sportsmen's interests.”

Members of the Sportsmen Alliance include TU and its Pennsylvania, New York, West Virginia, Mid-Atlantic and New Jersey state councils, Theodore Gordon Flyfishers, Izaak Walton League of America and its New York and Pennsylvania state divisions, New York State Trappers Asso-

ciation, Quality Deer Management Association, Pennsylvania Forest Coalition and The Wildlife Society.

Collectively, the Sportsmen Alliance members represent 60,000 sportsmen and women in the Marcellus Shale states.

The Sportsmen Alliance is not opposed to gas drilling and recognizes its potential economic and social benefits. Rather, it is

concerned that the current state and local policies governing gas drilling and hydraulic fracturing in the Marcellus Shale do not adequately protect valuable and irreplaceable natural resources, including clean water and critical habitat for fish and wildlife.

The Sportsmen Alliance has developed a set of recommendations for improving policies and

practices for Marcellus Shale development, including:

- Gas drilling industry exemptions under the federal Safe Drinking Water Act and Clean Water Act should be repealed;
- Each state in the Marcellus Shale region should adopt a comprehensive statewide water withdrawal law;

-- Drilling operations should not be permitted in watersheds with special state-designated conservation status without additional regulatory requirements, review and inspection;

-- Best management practices for stormwater management should be employed and well operators should be required to prove that

such practices are functioning prior to drilling; and

-- High fencing and/or netting should be required around wastewater storage impoundments and well pads to reduce the possibility that wildlife will enter well pad sites and consume wastewater or other toxic chemicals.

A full list of recommendations is available online.

June 4 Sportsmen Marcellus Shale Summit

On June 4, the Sportsmen Alliance will host the Sportsmen Marcellus Shale Summit at the

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Sportsmen Announce New Alliance To Protect Sporting In Marcellus Shale Region (continued)

University of Pittsburgh, Johnstown campus, to provide sportsmen and women with an opportunity to learn about potential impacts and discuss ways in which their interests can be protected.

Presenters will include local hunters and anglers, fish and wildlife experts, agencies, industry and sportsmen from the intermountain west, where oil and gas development has been actively occurring for decades.

Communities in the Marcellus Shale region have a rich heritage of hunting, fishing, trapping and other outdoor traditions on public and private lands—the very places targeted for Marcellus Shale gas drilling. In the Marcellus states, there are over 13 million sportsmen and women whose interests are at stake.

“As anglers, hunters and trappers, we are the eyes and ears on the ground and we have genuine concerns about the lack of monitoring, inspection and enforce-

ment of Marcellus Shale development activities,” said John Barone, Vice President for Conservation for Theodore Gordon Flyfishers. “Precious resources—like the world renowned and historic trout fisheries of the Catskills and Delaware watersheds—are at risk.”

Hunting and fishing in the Marcellus Shale region is big business. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, more than \$8.4 billion in revenue is generated each year in Pennsylvania,

New York and West Virginia—the three largest Marcellus Shale states—from fishing, hunting and wildlife-related recreation.

“Our members are very concerned about the impacts of hydraulic fracturing on water resources, fish and wildlife and outdoor recreation,” said Scott Kovarovics, Conservation Director for the Izaak Walton League of America.

“The Sportsmen Alliance’s common sense recommendations strike the right balance between energy development and conserving the region’s most important natural resources.”

“Sportsmen and women have a profound appreciation for the quiet solitude experienced when in the woods with nature,” said Dave Miller, Executive Director of the New York State Trappers

Association, “and drilling in the forests will inevitably affect the outdoors experience.”

“Deer and other wildlife do not pay attention to property lines, so it is important that protective measures are taken to prevent exposure to drilling wastewater and other contaminants on well pad sites,” said Kip Adams, Northern Region Director of Education and Outreach for the

Quality Deer Management Association.

“Equally as important, habitat fragmentation and vegetation loss on well pad sites, access roads and other areas should be minimized,” said Terra Rentz, Assistant Director of Government Affairs and Partnerships for The Wildlife Society, “and

when vegetation must be removed, the area should be replanted with native plant species to avoid displacing critical game and non-game species alike.”

“The present drilling activities are just a small fraction of what we will see in the future,” said Dick Martin, Coordinator of the Pennsylvania Forest Coalition.

“We must find ways to ensure that they do not interfere with lawful hunting, fishing and trapping on our public lands.”

For more information, visit the Sportsmen Alliance for Marcellus Conservation website.

Source: PA Environment Digest

EPA asks Pennsylvania Residents to Be Sun-Wise and Sun-Safe this Summer

Every hour, one American dies from skin cancer – the number one cancer in the U.S. To help people learn easy ways to combat the disease, the U.S. EPA Sun-Wise program has partnered with the National Council on Skin Cancer Prevention to designate today, the Friday before Memorial Day, as “Don’t Fry Day.” EPA encourages Pennsylvania residents practice sun-safe behaviors to reduce overexposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation – the main cause of skin cancer.

“Whether families and friends are going to the beach, a baseball game, or enjoying a backyard event, everyone should put on sunscreen and wear clothing and sunglasses that protect them from harmful UV rays,” said EPA’s mid-Atlantic Re-

gional Administrator Shawn M. Garvin. “If you don’t do this already, I encourage you and your family to start this healthy habit today.”

Each Memorial Day weekend, millions of Americans kick off the summer season and begin enjoying the great outdoors. Though skin cancer risks exist all year long, the dangers are even greater during the summer months, when the days are longer, and more people are outside for longer periods of time. From 1975–2007, the melanoma death rate more than doubled among residents over the age of 50. The rate of melanoma deaths among men is more than double the rate among women in Pennsylvania.

For “Don’t Fry Day” EPA encourages

everyone to practice the *Slip, Slop, Slap and Wrap* sun-safety tips:

- Slip on a shirt, preferably with sleeves;
- Slop on SPF 15+ sunscreen generously;
- Slap on a hat; and
- Wrap on sunglasses.

SunWise also recommends that families seek shade during the sun’s peak hours between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Checking the UV Index to plan outdoor activities is also key for identifying times that pose the greatest risk for overexposure to the sun.

In the U.S., skin cancer affects more than two million people each year, outnumber-

ing the cases of breast, prostate, lung and colon cancers combined. One in five Americans will develop the disease in their lifetime. Meanwhile, melanoma—the most serious form of skin cancer—is on the rise. It is the most common cancer among young adults ages 25 to 29.

Listen to EPA’s regional children’s health coordinator talk about ways to avoid over exposure to the sun; <http://www.epa.gov/region03/multimedia/playercontents/audio/2011DFD2.html>

For more on sun safety resources, including a sun safety packing list and new

public service announcements created by kids in K-8, go to: <http://www.epa.gov/sunwise/dfd.html>.

EPA’s SunWise program is a national environmental and health education program that teaches children and their caregivers how to be safe in the sun through the use of classroom-, school-, and community-based components. To learn more about free SunWise resources, download the UV Index widget or smart phone application, or sign up to receive daily UV Index forecasts, visit www.epa.gov/sunwise.

Source: U.S. EPA



Newly Installed Alaska North Slope Well Will Test Innovative Hydrate Production Technologies

Project Goals Include Injecting and Storing CO2 While Producing Methane Gas from Hydrate

A fully instrumented well that will test innovative technologies for producing methane gas from hydrate deposits has been safely installed on the North Slope of Alaska. As a result, the “Iġnik Sikumi” (Iġñupiaq for “fire in

the ice”) gas hydrate field trial well will be available for field experiments as early as winter 2011–12.

The well, the result of a partner

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Alaska North Slope Well (continued)

ship between ConocoPhillips and the Office of Fossil Energy's (FE) National Energy Technology Laboratory, will test a technology that involves injecting carbon dioxide (CO₂) into sandstone reservoirs containing methane hydrate. Laboratory studies indicate that the CO₂ molecules will replace the methane molecules within the solid hydrate lattice, resulting in the simultaneous sequestration of CO₂ in a solid hydrate structure and production of methane gas.

Methane hydrate consists of molecules of natural gas trapped in an open rigid framework of water molecules. It occurs in sediments within and below thick permafrost in Arctic regions, and in the subsurface of most continental waters with a depth of ~1,500 feet or greater. Many experts believe it represents a potentially vast source of global energy and FE scientists have studied methane hydrate resource potential and production technologies for more than

two decades. Researchers are addressing such important issues as seafloor stability, drilling safety, and a range of environmental issues, including gas hydrate's role in changing climates.

The recently completed operations include the acquisition of a research-level suite of measurements through the sub-permafrost hydrate-bearing sediments. The data confirm the occurrence of 160 feet of gas hydrate-bearing sand reservoirs in four separate zones, as pre-

dicted, and provide insight into their physical and mechanical properties. An array of down-hole pressure-temperature gauges were installed in the well, as well as a continuous fiber-optic temperature sensor outside the well casing, which will monitor the well as it returns to natural conditions following the drilling program.

In coming months, field trial participants will review the data to determine the optimal parameters for future field testing. Current plans are to re-enter the well in a future winter drilling season, and conduct a 1-2 month program of CO₂ injection and well production to assess the efficiency of the exchange process. Following those tests, the remaining time available before

the spring thaw (as much as 40 days) may be used to test reservoir response to pressure reduction in the wellbore. This alternative methane-production method, "depressurization," recently proved effective during short-term testing conducted by the governments of Japan and Canada at a site in northwestern Canada.

Source: U.S. EPA

Wingfield Pines Abandoned Mine Drainage Passive Treatment System



A Scientific Analysis

The Wingfield Pines Abandoned Mine Drainage site is located in Upper St. Clair, Allegheny County. In the 1940's the land was strip mined, which added to the destruction of the land, and

later was transformed into Wingfield Pines golf course and swim club. The approximate 20 years before the Allegheny Land Trust obtained the land it had been

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Wingfield Pines Abandoned Mine Drainage Passive Treatment System (continued)

vacated and the contaminated water freely drained into Chartiers Creek with high contents of iron. Then when Allegheny Land Trust stepped in late 2001, plans were initiated to reclaim and restore the land while at the same time purifying the water that would be deposited into the creek.

The ground water that emerges into the treatment system, comes from the abandon mine beneath the earth. As the water passes along underground, it dissolves

portions of the iron still present in the mines. The ferrous iron becomes ferric iron when the water comes in contact with oxygen. An orange tint is then produced because the iron becomes solid and falls out of the water depositing on the bottom of the ponds.

The system is coined with the term passive because there is no use of active means to force the system to work. Instead it is gravity driven and slowly passes through 5 settling ponds, plus a

wetland. The water moves at a slow enough pace that maximizes oxygen contact to induce iron precipitation. From the point water enters pond one and flows to pond 5, approximately 40 hours have elapsed. Another 8 hours will pass as water flows through the entire wetland constructed. The unique, long path of the wetland and the native plants encourage the last amounts of iron to drop out before the water is released into Chartiers Creek.

The system can only be fully appreciated by walking the grounds. There are designated paths that allow all visitors to obtain a close look at all 5 ponds and wetland. Observe the color changes of the pond while capturing the native animal species that have returned to the area through the efforts of so many.



This photograph shows an outlook of the wetland. The whole system occupies approximately 25 acres of land of the 80 acre property obtained by Allegheny Land Trust.

Source: Allegheny Land Trust

2011 River Sweep Saturday June 18

Since 1989, this award-winning cleanup for the Ohio River and its tributaries brings thousands of volunteers to the riverbanks to collect tons of trash and debris. River Sweep encompasses the entire length of the river, from

its origin in Pittsburgh, PA to its end in Cairo, IL, including 1,962 miles of shoreline and many tributaries.

More than 21,000 volunteers from public organizations, civic groups, recreational clubs, and

the general public in six states bordering the river come together to collect more than 20,000 tons of trash and other debris from the banks of the Ohio River and tributaries.

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State's Earliest West Nile Virus Detection Reported in Greene County

Pennsylvania has reported its earliest detection of a West Nile virus-carrying mosquito since testing began in 2000, the Department of Environmental Protection said today. The first detection of 2011 was a mosquito collection in Morgan Township, Greene County, on May 17.

Certain mosquito species carry the virus, which may cause humans to contract West Nile encephalitis, an infection that can

result in inflammation of the brain.

“After an unusually wet spring, high populations of adult mosquitoes have been detected in multiple areas,” DEP Secretary Mike Krancer said. “Our staff will continue to monitor mosquito populations and will perform preventative spraying activities where necessary to reduce those populations and reduce the threat to public health.”

West Nile virus was detected in 37 counties in 2010. There were 28 human cases reported statewide in 2010, the highest total of human cases since the all-time high of 236 cases in 2003. In 2004, Pennsylvania began its integrated pest management program, which has led to better identifying and controlling mosquito populations.

“Identifying West Nile virus so early in the season serves to remind us of the need to take steps to reduce exposure to mosquito

bites and to eliminate places where mosquitoes can breed,” Department of Health acting Physician General Stephen Ostroff said.

While most people do not get sick when infected with West Nile virus, everyone is at risk. Older adults and those with compromised immune systems have the highest risk of developing severe illness because their bod-

ies have a harder time fighting off disease.

The best defense against the West Nile Virus is not giving them a place to breed. Mosquitoes lay their eggs in stagnant water around the home. Weeds, tall grass, shrubbery and discarded tires also provide an outdoor home for adult mosquitoes.

Individuals can take a number of precautionary measures around

their homes to help eliminate mosquito-breeding areas, including:

Dispose of cans, buckets, plastic containers, ceramic pots or similar containers that hold water on your property.

Properly dispose of discarded tires that can collect water. Stagnant water is where most mosquitoes breed.

Drill holes in the bottom of outdoor recycling containers.

Have clogged roof gutters cleaned every year, particularly if the leaves from surrounding trees have a tendency to plug drains.

Turn over plastic wading pools when not in use.

Turn over wheelbarrows and don't let water stagnate in bird-baths.

Aerate ornamental pools or stock them with fish.

Clean and chlorinate swimming pools not in use and remove any water that may collect on pool covers.

For stagnant pools of water, homeowners can buy Bti products at lawn and garden, outdoor supply, home improvement and other stores. This naturally occurring bacteria kills mosquito larva but is safe for people, pets, aquatic life and plants.

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West Nile Virus Detection Reported in Greene County (continued)

Additionally, these simple precautions can prevent mosquito bites, particularly for those who are most at risk:

Make sure screens fit tightly over doors and windows to keep mosquitoes out of homes.

Consider wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants and socks when outdoors, particularly when mosquitoes are most active at dawn and dusk, or in areas known for having large numbers of mosquitoes.

When possible, reduce outdoor exposure at dawn and dusk during peak mosquito periods, usually April through October.

Use insect repellants according to the manufacturer's instructions. An effective repellant will contain DEET, picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus. Consult with a pediatrician or family physician if you have questions about the use of repellant on children, as repellant is not recommended for children under the age of two months.

For more information about West Nile Virus and the state's surveillance and control program, visit www.westnile.state.pa.us.

Source: PA West Nile Control Program Website

River Sweep is an event organized by the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission, an interstate water pollution agency for the Ohio River Valley, along with environmental protection and natural resource agencies from Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania. The ACSL has been involved for over 20 years. Below are the sites for Allegheny County.

2011 Allegheny County Cleanup Sites

County	Coordinator	Contact	Location	Time
Allegheny	Betsy Mallison	724-444-4229	Southside Riverfront Park	8:00 am- 12:00 pm
			Natrona Heights	8:00 am- 12:00 pm
			Elizabeth Riverfront Park	8:00 am- 12:00 pm
			Leetsdale Fish & Boat Commission Boat Ramp	8:00 am- 12:00 pm
			Nine Mile Run	8:00 am- 12:00 pm

EPA Invests \$1.4 Million to Help Redevelop Abandoned Sites in Western Pennsylvania

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced \$1.4 million in new investments to assess numerous abandoned properties in Western Pennsylvania communities slated for redevelopment. EPA’s brownfields grants will help the North Side Industrial Development Company in Pittsburgh and the Washington County Redevelopment Authority transform vacant and contaminated lands into environmentally and economically-viable places.

“Brownfields initiatives demonstrate how environmental protection and economic development work hand-in-hand,” said Shawn M. Garvin, regional administrator for EPA’s mid-Atlantic region. “Along with generating jobs, these grants will help southwestern Pennsylvania communities convert vacant industrial properties into assets for the community, the environment, and the economy.”

The North Side Industrial Development Company, which serves Allegheny and Westmoreland Counties, will receive two grants totaling \$1 million that will be used to assess abandoned industrial sites in multiple communities along the Ohio and Allegheny Rivers in and around Pittsburgh. The assessments are expected to facilitate the redevelopment of brownfields into advanced manufacturing facilities for new technologies such as

robotics, medical devices, and precision instruments.

The Washington County Redevelopment Authority will receive two grants totaling \$400,000 to assess Washington County properties that once thrived as an industrial and coal mining center. Plant closings have resulted in significant job losses that left behind hundreds of acres of va-

cant and underused contaminated lands. There are 136 brownfields sites in the county, the majority of which are former industrial facilities and mine-scarred lands. The brownfields assessments are expected to facilitate the county’s comprehensive cleanup and sustainable redevelopment plan to transform sites into community parks, reuse existing buildings, and incor-

porate green building techniques.

EPA’s brownfields program encourages redevelopment of America’s estimated 450,000 abandoned and contaminated waste sites. Brownfield grants help to assess, clean and redevelop abandoned, contaminated properties known as brownfields. Brownfields are sites

where expansion, redevelopment, or reuse may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant. Grant recipients are selected through a national competition.

Since the beginning of the program in 1995, EPA has invested 1,895 assessment grants totaling over \$447.6 million, 279 revolving loan fund grants totaling more than \$273.1 million, and 752 cleanup grants totaling \$140.8 million.

Additional information on the EPA brownfields program is available at <http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/>. Additional information on grant recipients is available at http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/grant_info/index.htm.

Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency