



Environmental News

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EPA ADMINISTRATOR ANNOUNCES BROWNFIELDS PROGRAM PARTNERSHIP WITH HABITAT FOR HUMANITY INTERNATIONAL

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EPA Administrator Christie Whitman today signed a memorandum-of-understanding with Habitat for Humanity International that will begin a partnership to build energy efficient housing on former brownfields properties. The agreement outlines each organization's pledge to work together to bring this shared goal to completion. Today's announcement marks another step in the EPA's longstanding efforts to promote economic vitality, while protecting our nation's environment and safeguarding public health.

"EPA is proud to be joining Habitat as partners in the effort to make the dream of home ownership come true for families across the country," said EPA Administrator Christie Whitman. "This is an excellent opportunity to work with Habitat for Humanity to encourage affordable and energy efficient housing on cleaned up brownfields properties. The agreement being signed today will help us do just that. We have already started this work together on sites in Missouri and Minnesota and now we will extend our efforts to five additional urban locations where abandoned brownfields can be turned into affordable homes. We also hope that through this agreement we can encourage the use of energy efficient products to not only save money but the environment as well."

EPA has worked cooperatively with Habitat for Humanity International's affiliates in the cities of Wellston, Mo., and Minneapolis, Minn., to construct homes on former brownfields properties. With today's agreement, EPA pledges to expand its work with Habitat to five additional cities. EPA and Habitat are currently working together to identify the five cities. EPA will use brownfields dollars to perform environmental assessments at community identified brownfields properties so that Habitat can locate safe, affordable building lots. Also, EPA through its new authority in the recently passed brownfields legislation may offer cleanup grants to non-profits such as Habitat to provide cleanup funds if the properties are found to be contaminated. In this way, EPA will provide environmental assessment and cleanup support to the Habitat effort to build energy efficient, affordable housing on property that was formerly abandoned or under-utilized.

Brownfields are abandoned, lightly contaminated properties often found in economically distressed areas that are returned to economically thriving, community hubs. Since 1993, the EPA has taken significant steps to clean up brownfields and return them to productive use, awarding over \$157 million in grants to cities, counties, tribes, states, non-profits and educational institutions nationwide. In his FY 2003 budget President Bush announced that he would more than double current brownfields funding to \$200 million. This, coupled with new brownfields legislation signed by the President, speaks to the Administration's commitment to brownfields redevelopment.

According to an independent study conducted by the Council for Urban Economic Development, the revitalization of brownfields has created over 22,000 permanent jobs, and leveraged \$2.48 in private investment for every \$1 spent by federal, state, or local governments. In a recent study done by George Washington University, it was found that for every 1 acre of brownfields reused, 4.5 acres of greenspace is saved.

For more information about EPA's brownfields program go to: <http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/>.