

Natural News

A publication of The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 8 Ecosystem Protection Program.



United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

Winter 2001



Restoring Contaminated Property - EPA's Brownfields Grants

~Mary Ahlstrom and Kathie Atencio, EPA Region 8

Since 1995, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in Region 8 has awarded over \$9 million in Brownfields Grants to more than 20 communities, states, and tribes. Region 8 includes the States of Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming and 26 American Indian Reservations.

A Brownfields is defined as a site, or portion of a site, that has actual or perceived contamination and an active potential for redevelopment or reuse. Often these sites are not developed or reused because developers fear environmental contamination and the liabilities associated with these properties. EPA's Brownfields Initiative empowers states, tribes, communities, and other stakeholders in economic redevelopment to work together in a timely manner to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields. It is estimated that there are from 450,000 - 650,000 brownfields properties across the United States.

EPA awards competitive Brownfields Grants in the following areas: 1) to conduct environmental investigations in determining the type and extent of contamination and in developing clean-up/reuse options (up to \$200,000 plus \$150,000 supplemental funds); 2) to managing a revolving loan fund for cleaning-up facilities and properties with environmental contamination (up to \$1,000,000); and 3) to train individuals in performing environmental clean-up activities or in obtaining other environmental jobs (up to \$200,000). EPA can also utilize its in-house contractors to conduct environmental investigations under a Target Brownfields Assessment.

Grant recipients may receive an additional \$50,000 for determining the contamination and reuse options on

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properties that will be utilized for "Greenspace". Reuses for the Greenspace properties have included recreational and nature trails, golf courses, wetlands, cultural areas, greenhouses, and open space.

For more information on Brownfields, contact **Kathie Atencio** at EPA in Denver at 1-800-227-9441 X6803 or atencio.kathie@epa.gov, or **Mary Ahlstrom** at 1-800-227-9441 X6626 ahlstrom.mary@epa.gov

Visit the national Brownfields web-site at www.epa.gov/brownfields or the Regional page at www.epa.gov/region8/brownfields

Paving Our Roads with Good Intentions: Environmental Planning and Review of Highway Projects

~Brad Crowder, EPA Region 8



“Environmental streamlining” is a popular concept. Streamlining is the process of shortening the time necessary to plan and complete Federal projects while meeting

the legal requirements to protect environmental and community resources. The EPA process of reviewing National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents such as Environmental Impact Statements and Environmental Assessments, as required by NEPA and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act, has been identified as a key area of concern for streamlining. This article describes some opportunities and concerns that are typical in environmental streamlining of highway projects.

NEPA requires that Federal proposals look at alternatives to proposed actions, invites public participation, and disclose environmental impacts of proposed actions. Highway planning in the past has typically avoided environmental concerns until project proposals were completed and the NEPA process was initiated. The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (“TEA -21”) virtually changed the Federal highway planning process. Department of Transportation’s (DOT) project planning includes fundamental project decisions that are completed prior to NEPA. Streamlining proposes to address and resolve environmental concerns early in the planning and NEPA processes.

EPA Region 8 is working with DOT officials to accomplish the following objectives:

- ♦ Support local environmental and transportation planning that thoroughly considers transportation alternatives to meet community mobility and safety needs while also minimizing environmental damages.
- ♦ Consider environmental and social effects from multiple transportation decisions and projects that affect economic and population growth.
- ♦ Enhance and restore environmental resources, particularly when required to mitigate the negative impacts from highway construction and maintenance.
- ♦ Resolve the concerns of all public interests equitably.
- ♦ Enhance broader participation of public and private interests in highway planning.

Natural resources are often lost or degraded by highway projects and their induced development. Adverse impacts to wetlands, air quality, fish and wildlife habitats, and the quality of human life are generally the most controversial impacts associated with highway projects. Other impacts of frequent concern are those to water resources and quality, and prime farmland. Quality of human life factors includes noise, visual resources, and urban and suburban sprawl. Nearby landowners and environmental groups often oppose highway projects because of environmental and social impacts. At the same time, highway projects typically enjoy widespread public support because expanded highway capacity is believed to relieve roadway congestion, although some studies show otherwise.

Environmental impacts of particular concern with highway and other infrastructure projects typically fall under the two categories of *indirect* and *cumulative* impacts. NEPA requires analysis of direct, indirect and cumulative impacts. According to NEPA:

- ♦ *Indirect* impacts are environmental effects that occur because of a project, but later in time. Indirect impacts often relate to economic development that occurs due to highway improvements. Highways, interchanges, and frontage roads in urban, suburban, and ex-urban areas facilitate economic development and population growth. The patterns, types, and timing of development are affected by infrastructure investments. Social and environmental effects may be related to increased access to previously less developed or even undeveloped areas. Environmental impacts occur when land uses displace or degrade natural resources. Induced development is a concern for EPA particularly in rapidly growing ex-urban areas because of the likely ecosystem impacts.
- ♦ *Cumulative* impacts are effects that occur as a result of several projects and actions over time. A project’s incremental direct and indirect effects, when added to all other past, present, and future actions, may cause significant cumulative impacts. For example, cumulative impacts could be caused by accumulated salts or sediments along a highway from sanding and other winter maintenance. Ultimately, runoff from a highway and adjacent areas can carry pollutants to streams and other waters. Adverse impacts to fish and wildlife, drinking water, and other aquatic resources may occur.

Preliminary discussions indicate that environmental streamlining will be challenging.

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Source Water Assessment and Protection Programs

~Marcella Hutchinson, EPA Region 8

So, what is Source Water? Do you mean lakes and rivers? Is it ground water?

The answer is all of the above! The Source Water Assessment and Protection Programs are focused on preventing sources of people's drinking water, both surface water and ground water, from becoming contaminated. Under the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) Amendments of 1996, States developed two-pronged programs, with source water assessments to provide information and source water protection to prevent contaminants from reaching the water supply or reaching levels of concern under SDWA.

A Source Water Assessment is a tool to provide a public water system, its customers, and the public with information needed to decide how best to protect their source of drinking water. The assessment identifies the area of the watershed or aquifer from which a public water system's drinking water is drawn, including those parts of the area most critical for protection. The assessment then identifies possible sources of contaminants that could affect the water's quality, and how likely they are to cause a problem. A point on the map readily identifies some of these possible sources of contaminants, for example, a chemical manufacturing site or the location at which a wastewater treatment plant releases its effluent. Others are land uses, like pesticide and fertilizer application for row crop agriculture or in urban areas. Public water systems that supply communities must report their assessment results in their annual water quality report (consumer confidence report) to their customers. Many States, including most in EPA Region 8, are also posting assessment results on their websites. You can link to State Source Water Protection homepages from the Headquarters EPA homepage at <http://www.epa.gov/safewater/source/contacts.html>

States that enforce their own drinking water regulations must complete source water assessments for all of their public water systems. All States except Wyoming, which has a voluntary Source Water Assessment and Protection program, fall into this category. The initial assessment phase should be completed in 2003 for most states.

While not required under SDWA, **protection** is the goal of the Source Water Assessment and Protection Programs. Building on the State Wellhead Protection Programs, Source Water Protection focuses on managing possible sources of contaminants to prevent pollution of drinking water supplies, and planning for emergencies. Source Water Protection is up to local communities, and is voluntary in most Region 8 States. The Source Water Protection umbrella covers a wide variety of possibilities including watershed approach activities, development of a local wellhead protection plan, the use of permits, local land use ordinances or zoning, and/or public education. State and federal agencies may be important partners in these local efforts.

For more information on EPA's Source Water Assessment and Protection Programs, please contact **Marcella Hutchinson** of the Source Water/Ground Water Team by e-mail at hutchinson.marcella@epa.gov or at 1-800-227-9441 X6753.

You can also visit the **US EPA Headquarters** website at: <http://www.epa.gov/ogwdw/protect.html> or the **EPA Region 8** website at <http://www.epa.gov/region08/water/swap/swap.html> For information on your State's Source Water Protection Programs, see the table below for a contact person.

State	Agency	Contact	Phone
Colorado	Department of Public Health and Environment	Gary Karst	(303) 692-3579
Montana	Department of Environmental Quality	Joe Meek	(406) 444-4806
North Dakota	Department of Health	Scott Radig	(701) 328-5233
South Dakota	Department of Natural Resources	Tricia Sebes	(605) 773-3296
Utah	Department of Environmental Quality	Sumner Newman	(801) 536-4195
Wyoming	Department of Environmental Quality	Kim Parker	(307) 777-7343

When the well's dry, we know the worth of water.

~Benjamin Franklin,
Poor Richard's Almanac

Missouri River Currents: Yellowstone River Roundtable

~Peter Ismert, EPA Region 8

The Yellowstone River begins as a small creek on the slopes of Younts Peak in the Teton Wilderness and flows for 676 miles through Montana to the confluence with the Missouri River in western North Dakota. The upper half of the river, primarily from the headwaters to Billings, Montana, supports a cold-water fishery. The lower portion of the river is warm-water habitat for native fish species such as the sicklefin chub, paddlefish, sturgeon chub, and the endangered pallid sturgeon. The Yellowstone River is a significant national resource that supports many diverse uses. Communities use the river for recreation, irrigation, drinking water, and for industrial purposes. The river is the focus of fast-growing ecological, economic, social, and political concerns.

The Yellowstone River Roundtable meeting in October 2000 was another of an increasingly more frequent type of event that brings people together of all interests to devise ways to agree on resource management and conservation issues. The purpose of the Roundtable was to "to obtain commitment for an enhanced, coordinated effort among state and federal management agencies based upon locally driven processes to promote conservation of the river system." This goal was easily achieved. Government agency representatives came away with confidence that community organizations and governments can collaborate with all interests to gather the necessary data and information that will lead to sound resource management decisions. Spearheading this collaborative effort will be the Yellowstone River Conservation District Council.

A Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) will be soon be formed and will be made up of individuals from a broad range of interests, including industries, local governments, the public, and environmental groups. The RAC, a locally-driven collaborative process, will make recommendations to the Council on resource use and conservation decisions. In addition, many government agencies have responsibilities and authorities along the river. Through the Council, the RAC can help these agencies make decisions that not only meet their goals and mandates, but will also meet the needs of landowners and other community members.

Funding from EPA's Regional Geographic Initiative grant helped kick-start the Yellowstone Roundtable meeting by providing grants to the Council and the Conservation Forum for internal coordination, and to the Montana



The Yellowstone River as it flows undammed across Montana to Williston, ND.

~Photo by Peter Ismert

Watercourse for planning the meeting.

Another collaborative effort on the river is the Governor's Upper Yellowstone River Task Force which was formed due to concern about the effects of proposed and

possible future, channel modifications. The section of river being evaluated by the Task force is from Gardiner, MT (at the northern boarder of Yellowstone National Park) 80 miles downstream to Springdale, MT. The Task Force provides a public forum for a diverse group of watershed and river users to seek solutions to river channel problems. The Task Force and permitting agencies agree that a comprehensive investigation of the cumulative effects of river channel modifications is needed to ensure that long-term solutions are developed.

For further information, please contact **Peter Ismert** at 1-800-227-9441 X 6215 or ismert.peter@epa.gov

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Environmental and natural resources agencies are unable to identify advantages of streamlining to accomplish their agencies' missions compared to conventional environmental review and consultation. Competing work demands provide more payoffs for their missions compared to completing highways faster. Hence, shifts in resources have not occurred. The U.S. Congress and other decision-makers will continue to scrutinize the time required to complete highway projects and are likely to provide a combination of pressures and incentives for agencies to accelerate NEPA and related statutory environmental requirements. For further information, please contact **Brad Crowder** at 1-800-227-9441 X 6396 or crowder.brad@epa.gov

I started out thinking of America as highways and state lines. As I got to know it better, I began to think of it as rivers. ~ **Charles Kuralt from the Magic of Rivers**

Governors and Premier Sign Red River Agreement

~Stacey Eriksen, EPA Region 8

On November 15, at the final meeting of the International Flood Mitigation Initiative (IFMI), Minnesota Governor Jesse Ventura, North Dakota Governor Edward Schafer, and Manitoba Premier Gary Doer met face-to-face for the first time. They came together to hear ideas from a two-year initiative funded by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Project IMPACT (building a disaster resistant community) and signed a memorandum of understanding. Thus, they committed to meet regularly to discuss flood prevention, to help facilitate public and private flood mitigation initiatives and to possibly create a new international commission to make sure the job gets done. Ideas pitched by the International Flood Mitigation Initiative include; establishing a partnership by media in the basin to inform the public on flood mitigation plans, setting up a Red River Basin Institute for Research, Mapping and Watershed Education, founding an Institute of Floodplain Architecture, and developing a Greenway on the Red River. EPA Region 8 has funded Greenway on the Red with \$25,000 of Regional Geographic Initiative money. Governor Ventura stated about the Greenway, "it's nice to see cooperative government working in a tripartisan manner." Premier Doer said the Greenway was "a very positive measure."



Ventura, Doer, and Schafer
~Photo by Jeanne Kern, FEMA

"Reverence for nature is compatible with the willingness to accept responsibility for a creative stewardship of the earth."
~Rene Dubos 1901-1982

Web Highlights

~Contributed by Greg Davis & Stacey Eriksen, EPA Region 8

- * **EPA Region 8 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Homepage:**
http://www.epa.gov/region08/laws_enforcement/nepa/nepa.html
The NEPA Website provides:
 - Description of how NEPA works
 - EPA Comment Letters to Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) and Environmental Assessments (EA)
 - Guidance on how to get involved in EISs/EAs/NEPA process
- * **EPA Region 8 Air Homepage:**
<http://www.epa.gov/region08/air/>
This site provides:
 - links to live air quality data
 - information on how air quality is monitored
 - education/tools on indoor air
- * **EPA Headquarters Envirofacts Data Warehouse and Applications:**
http://www.epa.gov/enviro/index_java.html
This site provides:
 - Data and locations for all EPA permits
 - Download or link to one or all of the EPA databases
- * **EPA Office of Water:**
<http://www.epa.gov/owm/pdfs/smartgro.pdf>
Potential Roles for Clean Water State Revolving Fund Programs in Smart Growth Initiatives
- * **SprawlWatch Clearinghouse:**
<http://www.sprawlwatch.org/newsletter.html>
- * **Sprawl Costs us All: How your taxes fuel suburban sprawl**
<http://www.sierraclub.org/sprawl/report00/>
- * **Another Cost of Sprawl: The Effects of Land Use on Utility Service Costs and Geographically-Sensitive User Rates:**
<http://www.istea.org/smartgrowth/water.htm>

What Does the Clean Water Act Offer to Watershed Work?

~Karen Hamilton, EPA Region 8

This is the first in a series of articles about certain sections of the Clean Water Act and how they might provide tools for watershed restoration and protection. This first article provides a very brief description of the intersection between watershed planning and the Clean Water Act. In the next articles, more details about each section of the Clean Water Act will be given.



Thousands of people in the western United States are dedicated to working collaboratively toward restoring and protecting water quality in the watersheds where they live. Every watershed group is unique because they reflect the local issues, leaders, landscape, and culture. Yet, they have some common characteristics and activities. One of the commonalities among watershed groups is the need to develop goals based on watershed issues, and ways to meet those goals.

Often this is done through some kind of plan. When the issues have to do with water quality threats or problems, the resulting plan will likely have activities that:

- 1) Set goals for the water bodies of concern;
- 2) Figure out water quality trends and sources of pollution;
- 3) Protect and restore water quality, including habitat; and
- 4) Determine how effective the actions have been to meet the goals.

The Clean Water Act provides a framework that can be tailored, in part or wholly, to locally developed watershed plans that emphasize water quality. At a minimum, if you are working with a watershed group, understanding the various parts of the Clean Water Act will be useful to you. A State water quality agency is responsible for managing the water quality of the lake or stream you are working with (e.g., The Colorado Water Quality Control Division, or the Utah Department of Environmental Quality) according to the Clean Water Act. This agency describes what uses each water body in the State should be able to provide, such as drinking water, warm water fishery, and swimming (full immersion human contact). The agency collects water quality information on the waters in the State to determine whether they are able to provide those uses. The agency also permits discharges and provides funding to protect some water bodies and restore others in order to meet the expectations of their uses.

All of these activities carried out by your State water quality agency can give you a starting point for setting goals and gathering data about your stream or lake. In addition there may be an opportunity for you to obtain some funding and technical assistance to aid in your quest for understanding and protecting your lake or stream. Finally, the uses expected of each water body are established by a citizen's regulatory board, council or commission through a public process; therefore, you may wish to become more involved in this process and other activities conducted by the State water quality agency that affect your water body.

In the following table, the elements of a typical watershed plan are compared to Clean Water Act sections that address those elements.

Watershed Planning

GENERIC PLAN	CLEAN WATER ACT
◆ Goal Setting	◆ Section 303 (Water Quality Standards) - uses designated by the State water quality board, council, or commission for each stream segment and the criteria for many water quality characteristics that are needed to maintain those uses.
◆ Water Quality Data Development	◆ Section 305(b), which requires a biennial report from States that describe water quality status. ◆ Section 106, which provides funding to the States' water quality programs. ◆ Section 104(b), which authorizes the use of funds for special studies, planning, research, data gathering through a variety of ways including volunteer monitoring programs.
◆ Watershed Assessment, including knowing where pollutants or problems are coming from.	◆ Section 303, which requires stream segments that are not meeting uses designated by the State to be on a list of impaired, streams (303 (d) list.)

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Watershed Assessment, including knowing where pollutants or problems are coming from. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Section 303 which requires that the pollutants causing impairments be allocated among their sources, with limits on the sources so that the standards (goals) are met (Total Maximum Daily Loads) (a “pollution budget”). ◆ Section 104 which authorizes funds for a variety of needs, including data analysis and management. ◆ Section 208 – Area-wide waste treatment management planning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Implementation ◆ Protection and Stewardship ◆ Restoration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Funding authorized by Sections 104 (general studies, etc.) and Section 319 (nonpoint source). ◆ Funding authorized by Section 601 (State Revolving Fund). ◆ Section 402 - National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits, including stormwater permits ◆ Section 404 stream channel and wetlands permits. ◆ Educational programs developed for the nonpoint source program (Section 319) or other programs such as stream channel and wetlands protection (Sections 104 and 404).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Evaluation and Adjustment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Requirements under Sections 104 and 319 (nonpoint source program) for monitoring restoration projects. ◆ Section 305(b) requires biennial State reporting of water quality. ◆ Section 303 triennial review of State stream standards.

For more information, please contact Karen Hamilton at
1-800-227-9441 X6236 or hamilton.karen@epa.gov

“Outreach Grants” for the Colorado Nonpoint Source Pollution Program

~Loretta Lohman, Colorado Nonpoint Source Information and Education Coordinator

The Colorado Nonpoint Source (NPS) Program, through the Education and Information Coordinator, is charged with increasing interest, participation and knowledge of the public, educators and entities involved in water-related activities regarding NPS and associated water quality issues.

How is the goal achieved? To do this the NPS Program has developed a program of “mini grants” that provides funding for small projects outside the more rigorous NPS grant program. The goal of the mini-grant program is to support information exchange, education and hands-on efforts to provide information and alternative actions to the citizens of Colorado related to nonpoint source water pollution. One priority is for grants awarded to educational institutions before the start of each school year.

The Grants: The grants in this program are awarded by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Water Quality Control Division, on a cost-reimbursement basis. Project sponsors will be reimbursed for costs incurred to implement the project based on the budget provided in the proposal. Mini-grants can be made for up to \$5,000 although typical grants range from \$1,000 to \$2,500. Matching funds are required, but may be either in-kind services or in dollars—increasing the scope of your program.

For more information, contact **Loretta Lohman**, Colorado Nonpoint Source Information and Education Coordinator, before March 15, 2001, at CSU-Cooperative Extension, Denver, 110 16th Street, Suite 300, Denver, CO 80202, 303-549-3063 cell, 720-913-5285 phone, 720-913-5289 fax, or E-mail:

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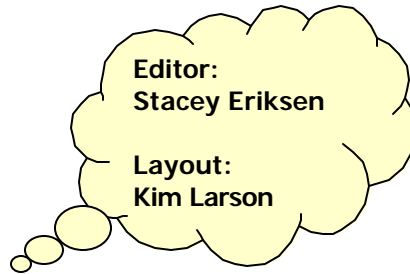
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**Check out Community Based
Environmental Protection on the web:**
[http://www.epa.gov/region08/community
_resources/cbep/cbep.html](http://www.epa.gov/region08/community_resources/cbep/cbep.html)

*Out of the area? Call 1-800-227-8917
and the extension of the person you are
trying to reach.*

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