

Dunstan, other congressmen praise \$400,000 grant from EPA to identify Madison County brownfields

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE – Madison County has received \$400,000 from an Environmental Protection Agency (**EPA**) grant to help identify contaminated sites.

Madison County Chairman **Alan J. Dunstan** said the grant will be primarily concentrated on the northern, eastern and southern portion of the county to identify historically contaminated properties or what is known as brownfields.

He said he was excited that the county will have this extended opportunity by the EPA to locate these areas, which ultimately will be a positive for the county when these brownfields are cleaned up.

“In many cases, we are looking at dilapidated buildings, where there is a gas station or leaking storage tanks,” he said. These former gas stations are leaking and have contaminated the soils.”

Two brownfields that Dunstan used as examples were in Worden and another in Marine, both former gas stations. One of the old gas stations had been vacant for years, he said. “This is going to get us going in the right direction in regard to brownfields in the county.”

Dunstan said he wanted to give credit where credit was due and commended the congressmen present at a press conference on Wednesday morning that helped obtain the grant.

Dunstan was joined by U.S. Congressmen John Shimkus (Ill. 15th Dist.), Rodney Davis (Ill. 13th Dist.) and Mike Bost (12th Dist.). Once the brownfields are positively identified, they will be targeted for clean-up and redevelopment, a positive for Madison County.

In recent years, EPA brownfield assessment grants were awarded to the Southwestern Illinois Development Authority and America’s Central Port (formerly the Tri-City Regional Port District), to access more than 70 sites in the industrial corridor located in the western portion of the county. Dunstan said the brownfield assessment grants in the America’s Central Port and Tri-City Regional Port District made a considerable difference.

“Being awarded this grant from the EPA is an important development in the eventual clean-up of abandoned and dilapidated industrial and commercial properties throughout Madison County,” Dunstan said in making the announcement. “And it is also a key first step in Madison County’s economic development plan to concentrate on areas where jobs are needed most.”

Dunstan said, “Although the EPA awarded Madison County this grant based on need, the support our application received from **Congressmen (John) Shimkus, (Rodney)**

Davis and (Mike) Bost was particularly helpful when you consider Madison County was just one of thousands of counties throughout the country competing for a limited amount of available grant dollars.

“This was clearly an example of elected officials, representing different political parties, working together for the betterment of Madison County and its residents,” Dunstan added. “This collective effort will result in improved public health, a better environment and, ultimately, jobs for our residents.”

Congressman Shimkus stressed the redevelopment opportunities of brownfield sites that will be identified. “I am committed to working toward the transformation of our area’s abandoned and contaminated properties into environmentally safe areas for use by our citizens and for possible redevelopment,” the congressman stated. “Many of the sites we believe will be classified as brownfields are strategically located and are excellent sites for redevelopment.”

Potential Brownfield sites that will be addressed as part of this study range from industrial sites as large as 80 acres to small, former gas stations. Preliminary work on the project revealed that in a number of rural areas, businesses which at one time supported the industrial facilities in the eastern part of the county are abandoned and appear to suffer from contamination.

Smaller communities located along major transportation corridors have numerous former gas stations that have long closed and those sites remain an impediment to redevelopment. Those abandoned gas stations have likely released petroleum/BTEX into the soil and groundwater. Although much of this is undocumented, early gas stations are notorious for leaking tanks.

Frank Miles, administrator of Madison County Community Development, said the EPA grant is only for the identification of brownfield sites in Madison County and does not include site clean-up. “After the study is completed, Madison County Community Development will develop a plan for the identified brownfield that includes clean-up and removal of any contamination.”

The EPA specifies that \$200,000 of the \$400,000, three-year grant be used to identify hazardous brownfield sites with heavy metals, creosote and other toxicants in the soil. The remainder of the grant funds will be used to identify brownfield sites contaminated by petroleum products.

The \$400,000 grant will be used to prioritize and investigate the historic uses of the properties, determine the type, severity and extent of contaminants, and develop remedial alternatives that will allow for safe and viable reuse of the properties.

“Many of the sites we have identified as brownfields, pending completion of the study, are located in primarily rural, agricultural areas. It is the combination of agriculture, industry and a strategic location that has made Madison County successful, and will serve as the basis for the future success of the county,” stated Congressman Davis. “The clean-up of brownfields will only make the county more attractive for businesses looking to expand or relocate, and will lead to increased revenues and jobs.”

Madison County Community Development will serve as the lead agency and will retain a qualified environmental consultant to assist in managing and performing the activities funded by the grant. The department will oversee the work of the consultant and act as a liaison between the EPA, coalition members, the public, property owners and other stakeholders involved in projects resulting from this grant.

Congressman Bost said the identification and eventual clean-up of brownfield sites is a victory for the people of Madison County. “The county’s receiving this grant from the EPA and the clean-up of the brownfields will result in a cleaner environment, an increase in the values of surrounding properties and increased revenues for local governments which will, in turn, help lessen the tax burden on our residents. It is a victory for the people of the Illinois’ 12th Congressional District and all of Madison County.”

