

Application Information Sheet

1) **Applicant Identification:**

Southern Mississippi Planning and Development District
10441 Corporate Drive, Suite 1, Gulfport, Mississippi 39503
DUNS: 069386001; UEI: ER6TDW6YSZM8

2) **Website URL:**

Lead Member - Southern Mississippi Planning and Development District www.smpdd.com
Non-Lead Member – Town of Prentiss www.townofprentiss.gov
Non-Lead Member – Town of Bassfield <https://www.facebook.com/p/Town-of-Bassfield-100064538662566/>

3) **Funding Request:**

- a) **Assessment Grant Type:** Assessment Coalition
- b) **Federal Funds Requested:** \$1,500,000

4) **Location:**

All grant activities will be conducted within the geographic boundaries of the Southern Mississippi Planning and Development District's (SMPDD) service area which includes the following 15 counties and 38 municipalities (Cities and Towns) in South Mississippi:

a) **and b) City and County:**

Covington County: Collins, Mount Olive, and Seminary

Forrest County: Hattiesburg and Petal

George County: Lucedale

Greene County: Leakesville, McLain, and State Line

Hancock County: Bay St. Louis, Diamondhead, and Waveland;

Harrison County: Biloxi, D'Iberville, Gulfport, Long Beach, and Pass Christian;

Jackson County: Gautier, Ocean Springs, Moss Point, and Pascagoula

Jefferson Davis County: **Bassfield*** and **Prentiss***

Jones County: Ellisville, Laurel, Sandersville, and Soso

Lamar County: Hattiesburg, Lumberton, Purvis, and Sumrall

Marion County: Columbia

Pearl River County: Picayune and Poplarville

Perry County: Beaumont, New Augusta, and Richton

Stone County: Wiggins

Wayne County: Waynesboro

***Non-Lead Coalition Partners**

c) State or Reservation: Mississippi

5) Coalition Members' Target Areas and Priority Site Information:

A map depicting the target areas listed in the table below is attached.

Target Area Name (TA)	TA Geographic Identifier	Priority Site Name and Address	Priority Site Census Tract / or Block
Coalition Member: Town of Prentiss (Non-Lead)			
Town of Prentiss	Municipality Jurisdictional limits	Old Prentiss Gas Station, 2307 Columbia Ave, Prentiss, MS 39474	28065950102
Coalition Member: Town of Bassfield (Non-Lead)			
Town of Bassfield	Municipality Jurisdictional limits	King's Gin, 13 Hawkins Ave, Bassfield, MS 39421	28065950201
Coalition Member: Southern Mississippi Planning and Development District (Coalition Lead)			
St. Stephens Road Area	280659502024010 (Located in Unincorporated Jefferson Davis County)	Prentiss Institute, 292 JE Johnson Road, Prentiss, MS 39474	280659502024010
Mobile Street/Twin Forks Rising Community	28035010700	Meridian Fertilizer Site, East 7th St, Hattiesburg, MS 39401	28035010700

6) Contacts:

a) Project Director:

Name: Kristyn Gunter, SMPDD Special Projects Division Director

Phone: (228) 868-2311

Email: kgunter@smpdd.com

Mailing Address: 10441 Corporate Drive, Suite 1, Gulfport, Mississippi 39503

b) Chief Executive/Highest Ranking Official:

Name: Leonard Bentz, SMPDD Executive Director

Phone: (228) 868-2311

Email: lbentz@smpdd.com

Mailing Address: 10441 Corporate Drive, Suite 1, Gulfport, Mississippi 39503

7) Population¹:

a) Total Population of SMPDD Service Area: 805,302

b) The priority sites are located within the Cities/towns and County identified below:

(1) Town of Prentiss: 976

(2) Town of Bassfield: 192

(3) Unincorporated Jefferson Davis County (St. Stephens Road TA): 10,153

(4) City of Hattiesburg: 48,730

¹ <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2020/data/>

8) Other Factors Checklist:

Other Factors	Page #
Community Population is 15,000 or less	1, 6, 7
The applicant is, or will assist, a federally recognized Indian tribe or United States territory	
The priority brownfield site(s) is impacted by mine-scarred land	
The priority brownfield site(s) is adjacent to a body of water (i.e., the border of the priority site(s) is contiguous or partially contiguous to the body of water, or would be contiguous or partially contiguous with a body of water but for a street, road, or other public thoroughfare separating them).	3
The priority site(s) is in a federally designated flood plain	2, 3
The reuse of the priority site(s) will facilitate renewable energy from wind, solar or geothermal energy.	4
The reuse of the priority site (s) will incorporate energy efficiency measures.	
The proposed project will improve local resilience to the impacts of extreme weather events and natural disasters.	
At least 30% of the overall project budget will be spent on eligible reuse/area-wide planning activities, as described in Section 3.A.(2), for priority sites within the target areas.	11
The target area(s) is impacted by a coal-fired power plant that has recently closed (2015 or later) or is closing.	

9) Letter from the State of Tribal Environmental Authority: See Attached

10) Releasing Copies of Applications: We request the following information be redacted prior to releasing the grant application:

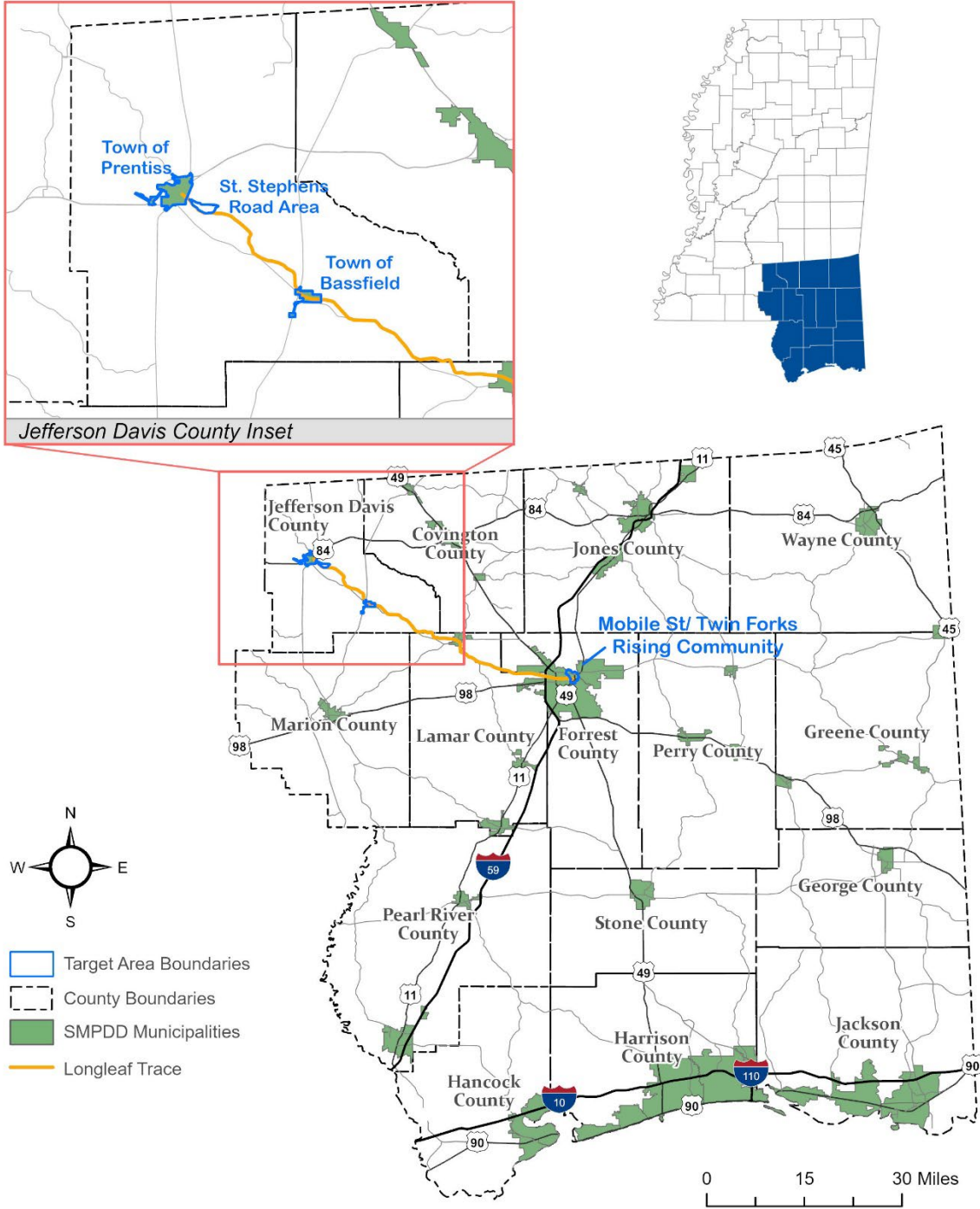
- a) The table in Section 2.f of the Narrative contains contact information for our project partners. Names and email addresses should be redacted prior to release of this grant application.
- b) The table in Section 6 of the Threshold Criteria Attachment contains contact information for our project partners. Names and email addresses should be redacted prior to release of this grant application.



Southern Mississippi Planning & Development District

BUILDING A STRONGER MISSISSIPPI

Southern Mississippi Planning and Development District





STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
TATE REEVES
GOVERNOR
MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
CHRIS WELLS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

January 5, 2026

Ms. Kristyn Gunter
Director, Special Projects Division
Southern Mississippi Planning and Development District
10441 Corporate Drive, Suite 1
Gulfport, MS 39503

**RE: EPA Brownfield Grant Application Acknowledgement
FY26 104(k) Coalition Assessment Grant
Southern Mississippi Planning and Development District**

Dear Ms. Gunter:

The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) hereby acknowledges the Southern Mississippi Planning and Development District's (SMPDD) plans to conduct brownfield assessments and apply for federal grant funds through the United States Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Brownfields initiative. MDEQ believes the targeted areas within the planning district (e.g., Long Leaf Trace, Bassfield, Prentiss) are communities in considerable need of brownfield assessment and future redevelopment opportunities. Since many brownfields are abandoned, underutilized, and contaminated, MDEQ is expressly interested in seeing entities like the SMPDD taking the initiative to assess, remediate, and return these sites to productive use. These efforts are consistent with our mission to safeguard the health, safety, and welfare of present and future generations of Mississippians.

We look forward to our continued role in the SMPDD's Brownfield Initiative and are available to assist you at any time. Should you have any questions or comments concerning this matter, please contact me at (601) 961-5240.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Thomas L. Wallace".

Thomas L. Wallace, P.E.
Division Chief – GARD

1. PROJECT AREA DESCRIPTION AND PLANS FOR REVITALIZATION

Coalition Members, Target Areas and Brownfields

1.a. Coalition Members

The **Southern Mississippi Planning and Development District (SMPDD)**, the lead applicant for this coalition, is a private, 501(C)(3) non-profit corporation, established in 1966 to serve the southern 15-county area of Mississippi, as a liaison between local government and the various state, regional and federal agencies involved in economic, community and human development. SMPDD has strategically formed a coalition with the **Town of Prentiss** and the **Town of Bassfield, both local governments**, to address long standing brownfield challenges that these municipalities cannot manage alone due to resource and funding, and the fact that they have no employees dedicated to Brownfields and no environmental staff. Located within Jefferson Davis County at the northern end of the Longleaf Trace, Prentiss (population¹ 976, land area of 3 square miles) and Bassfield (population 192, land area of 1 square mile) are very small municipalities with limited staff and technical capacity to apply for and manage their own Brownfields Grant and lack resources to address Brownfield sites within their communities. SMPDD will assess at least two sites in each coalition member’s geographic boundary (Prentiss, Bassfield, and SMPDD lead target area).

1.b. Overview of Brownfield Challenges and Description of Target Area

SMPDD’s regional footprint includes our impoverished 15-county area (Covington, Forrest, George, Greene, Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, Jefferson Davis, Jones, Lamar, Marion, Pearl River, Perry, Stone and Wayne Counties) and all 38 municipalities within those counties. **SMPDD’s jurisdictional boundary will serve as the geographic boundary where eligible activities will be conducted under this grant.** Encompassing roughly 8,800 square miles sandwiched between the Old Choctaw line established by the Treaty of Mt. Dexter in 1805 and the Gulf Coast, the SMPDD service area was built on wood products, exporting, and the seafood industry. Industrial manufacturers and forest product companies have enjoyed access to our region’s resources and workforce, but as their operations have closed, we have been left with countless parcels of unused and environmentally complex land. The coalition’s geographic area includes the jurisdictional limits of non-lead members, **Prentiss and Bassfield**, which are located within the broader **SMPDD regional footprint**, with emphasis on corridors and downtowns influenced by the Longleaf Trace. Completed in 2000, the 44-mile Longleaf Trace rail-trail follows a former railroad corridor between Prentiss and Hattiesburg and provides a proven framework for corridor-based revitalization and visitor-support reuse. The trail's name, "Longleaf," is a direct nod to the historic longleaf pine forests of the region. The longleaf pine was historically crucial for the South's economy, providing timber and "naval stores" like pitch, tar, and turpentine for shipbuilding. The railroad was the backbone of the timber industry that relied on the longleaf pine, making the trail's path a symbol of the area's industrial past.

Most of SMPDD’s service area is considered rural, with **79% of our municipalities having a small population of below 15,000 people²**, with 11 of the 38 municipalities having populations of less than 1,000, and **over one-half of our counties (8) experiencing “persistent poverty”³**, including Jefferson Davis county where our coalition partners are located. Across these rural communities, common brownfield challenges include vacant and abandoned commercial buildings; former service stations with suspected petroleum impacts and possible underground storage tank (UST) issues; underutilized industrial parcels affected by disinvestment; and properties where environmental uncertainty and liability concerns suppress private investment. These impacts are magnified by small tax bases and limited access to redevelopment capital. This grant will facilitate the assessment of these properties allowing us to address the brownfield challenges presented by these sites. The coalition’s strategy is corridor-based and cumulative: it builds from existing public investments and redevelopment momentum along the Longleaf Trace and associated downtown/commercial corridors, and it targets legacy petroleum and small commercial brownfields that are common barriers to reinvestment in rural communities.

Statistics below are the most current data from the U.S. Census Bureau, taken from the 2020 Decennial Census and the 2019-2023 American Community Survey (ACS) 5yr estimates. If the corresponding census place, tract, or block level data was not available, county level data is reported.

Coalition Partner	Target Area and Geographic Boundary
Town of Prentiss	Town of Prentiss jurisdictional boundary
Town of Bassfield	Town of Bassfield jurisdictional boundary
SMPDD	St. Stephens Rd Area, Unincorporated Jefferson Davis County, Census Block 280659502024010
SMPDD	Mobile St/Twin Forks Rising Community, Hattiesburg, Census Tract 28035010700

¹ 2020 Decennial Census

² 2019-2023 American Community Survey (ACS) Estimates

³ Economic Development Administration FY2025 Persistent Poverty Counties list

For this project, the coalition will focus on 4 target areas, all of which are located within *High Poverty Areas*⁴ as defined by the U.S. Economic Development Administration: The *Town of Prentiss*, the *Town of Bassfield*, the *St. Stephens Rd Area* in rural Jefferson Davis County, and the *Mobile St/Twin Forks Rising Community* in Hattiesburg.

Target Area 1 - Town of Prentiss: The Town of Prentiss, a non-lead coalition member, is a small, rural municipality located in south Mississippi and serves as the county seat of Jefferson Davis County. The geographic area for this Target Area is the town's jurisdictional limits. Historically, Prentiss supported a modest industrial and commercial base and served as a local employment center for the surrounding area. Over time, broader economic restructuring and shifts in regional transportation reduced industrial activity, diverted through-traffic away from the town, and contributed to long-term disinvestment. These trends are reflected in population loss, as Prentiss experienced a 9.7% decline in population between 2010 and 2020. Several properties in the target area are now vacant or underutilized and exhibit characteristics commonly associated with brownfields, such as aging infrastructure and environmental uncertainty that discourages private reinvestment. Despite these challenges, Prentiss currently functions as the gateway to the Longleaf Trace, positioning the town as an entry point for visitors, trail users, and regional travelers. Strategic assessment and reuse of brownfield properties are critical to enabling Prentiss to better leverage this gateway role, strengthen local economic activity, and support community revitalization.

Target Area 2 - Town of Bassfield: Similar to Prentiss, Bassfield, a non-lead coalition member, is a rural community that has experienced long-term economic decline and associated population loss. The geographic area for this Target Area is the town's jurisdictional limits. Between 2010 and 2020, Bassfield's population declined by approximately 24% to just 192 people, and the town's median household income (\$30,208) is substantially lower than both the state (\$54,915) and national (\$78,538) medians. Showcasing this decline, Bassfield's housing vacancy rate is 200% higher than the Nation⁵. With continued disinvestment in the downtown area, Bassfield challenges were further intensified in April 2020, when the community was struck by a record-breaking EF4 tornado⁶. Reaching a peak width of 2.25 miles, it was the widest tornado in Mississippi history and the third-largest ever recorded in the U.S. The storm caused extensive damage to infrastructure, leaving multiple properties damaged, abandoned, or economically infeasible to redevelop.

Target Area 3 SMPDD - St. Stephens Road (Census Block 4010): The St. Stephens Road target area is located just outside the municipal boundaries of the Town of Prentiss and encompasses the census block along St. Stephens Road. Constructed between 1806 and 1811, St. Stephens Road served as a key route supporting the movement of goods and people across what was then the Mississippi Territory to Fort St. Stephens in present-day Alabama, an important regional military and administrative outpost during the territorial period. As transportation networks evolved and regional economic activity shifted, portions of the corridor experienced decline and underutilization. Properties along St. Stephens Road now include legacy infrastructure with properties that have environmental uncertainty and parcels that limit reinvestment. The Target Area is home to the former Prentiss Institute, one of the most widely recognized private African-American schools in early 20th century Mississippi, as well as a few homes. The population of the Census Block is minimal at 9 people, but the impacts of focused brownfield assessment and revitalization efforts will be felt throughout the entire region.

Target Area 4 SMPDD - Mobile St/Twin Forks Rising Community (Census Tract 107): Hattiesburg was founded in 1884 as a railroad junction for the regional lumber industry. Heavy manufacturing developed along the railroad corridor including lumber-related industries (turpentine production and wood treatment facilities), as well as oil refineries. Rich in African American history and culture, the Mobile St/TFR community is a defined target area for Brownfield assessment funding. In 1964, the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO) launched Mississippi Freedom Summer with its headquarters at 507 Mobile St. The Freedom Schools started in local Hattiesburg African American churches and are celebrated by a famous Toni Morrison "Bench by the Road", which acts as a landmark to honor the African American men and women who fought at the forefront of the battle for freedom. *Historically, the Mobile Street area was the only part of town where the African American community could go to try on clothes.*⁷ This community has been in steady decline due to numerous challenges. Two devastating tornadoes and a downturn in commercial investment have resulted in poorly-maintained structures, increased vacancies, and abandoned sites including the Meridian Fertilizer Site. Socioeconomic challenges include a declining population (-18.92% since 2010), and a median household income of \$38,007, much lower than the state average (\$54,915). This severe economic distress is exacerbated by the development challenges of being **located in a federally-designated floodplain**.

The Longleaf Trace functions as a regional economic and recreation asset, with an estimated ~250,000 annual trail uses and documented visitor spending impacts; aligning brownfield assessment and reuse planning to support

⁴ <https://mtgis-portal.geo.census.gov/arcgis/apps/experiencebuilder/experience/?id=ad8ad0751e474f938fc98345462cdfb>

⁵ 2019-2023 American Community Survey (ACS) Estimates

⁶ <https://prentissheadlight.com/2020/04/22/bassfield-tornado-largest-ever-recorded-in-state-of-mississippi/>

⁷ Personal Interview

trail-adjacent redevelopment helps protect this public investment and converts existing activity into downtown reinvestment according to the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy case study⁸.

1.c. Description of the Priority Brownfield Site(s)

Town of Prentiss TA - Old Prentiss Gas Station – 2307 Columbia Ave, Prentiss The Old Prentiss Gas Station is a former gasoline service station constructed in the 1950s and located along Main Street in downtown Prentiss, just 2 doors down from the historic county courthouse. The property historically operated as a neighborhood fueling station but has been vacant for an extended period, resulting in substantial structural deterioration. The existing structure is in a dilapidated condition, including a missing roof and prolonged exposure to the elements. An abandoned underground storage tank remains onsite, complicating sale, reuse planning, and the securing of redevelopment funding for the site and adjoining properties due to unknowns related to potential vapor intrusion, offsite migration of contamination, and impacts to sewer infrastructure and potentially the regional drinking water aquifer system.

Town of Bassfield TA – King’s Gin - 13 Hawkins Ave, Bassfield is a former cotton-gin on 0.38 acres, located a stone’s throw from the Longleaf Trace trail, that anchors the Hawkins Avenue corridor near other historic commercial uses. The site is currently used primarily for storage within the gin-related structure and a newer metal storage building. Historic cotton-gin operations and long-term industrial use commonly involves fuels, lubricants, equipment maintenance, and potential legacy materials in older structures (e.g., asbestos-containing materials and lead-based paint), creating environmental uncertainty that discourages reinvestment. A Phase I ESA—and Phase II investigation if warranted—will clarify environmental conditions, reduce liability concerns, and support cleanup planning. These actions will position the property for productive reuse that strengthens the Hawkins Avenue corridor and supports trail-oriented redevelopment (e.g., small commercial services, flexible light industrial/storage, or visitor-support uses tied to the Longleaf Trace).

SMPDD St. Stephens Road TA - Prentiss Institute – 292 JE Johnson Road, Prentiss Located just ¼ mile outside the city limits of the Town of Prentiss and founded in 1907, the Prentiss Institute was established to provide educational opportunities at a time when segregation severely limited equal access to schools. Located adjacent to the Longleaf Trace and encompassing approximately 86 acres and 9 remaining buildings, the campus is situated in a sparsely populated, agricultural region and primarily served students from low-income farming households, many of whom paid tuition through in-kind contributions such as produce and livestock, rather than cash⁹. Over time, the Institute expanded to include elementary, secondary, and later junior college-level instruction, becoming an important local institution within a community characterized by persistent poverty and limited economic opportunity¹⁰. At its peak, the Prentiss Institute operated an extensive campus with multiple instructional, residential, and support buildings and several hundred acres of agricultural land. After more than eight decades of operation, the Prentiss Institute closed due to declining enrollment and corresponding loss of revenue. The school ultimately ceased operations in 1989, leaving a large, multi-building campus in a community with a small population base and limited local resources to support reuse or maintenance. Listed on the Mississippi Heritage Trust’s 10 Most Endangered Historic Places in 2023¹¹, assessment and redevelopment of the site is paramount to the revitalization of Jefferson Davis County. The Prentiss Institute Board of Trustees has overseen the revitalization of one of the 9 buildings on site, and this grant will build on that momentum and success. The campus is **located adjacent to White Sand Creek that forms the western property boundary**, and a portion of the property is **located within a federally designated flood plain**, adding an important environmental consideration for assessment and planning. However, this has not diminished the historical and cultural significance of the Institute or its enduring importance to the surrounding community.

SMPDD Mobile Street/TFR TA - Meridian Fertilizer Plant (former) – ACRES #97101, East 7th St, Hattiesburg The priority brownfield site in the Mobile St/TFR Community of Hattiesburg is the former Meridian Fertilizer Plant located on East 7th St, approximately ¼ mi north of the end of the Longleaf Trace. The approximately 13-acre site, **located within a federally designated flood plain**, was once home to the Meridian Fertilizer Factory from 1902 until 1963, when the facility was purchased by Mississippi Chemical. The site operated as a fertilizer storage and mixing facility until it closed in 1988, then was used as a building material salvage operation. Historic records indicate the former presence of multiple underground storage tanks and a sulfuric acid tank on the site. Limited assessment work has been conducted on the northern portion of the site that indicates a need for further assessment of the current arsenic levels found in the soil. Portions of the site have been used by the homeless, potentially exposing our most vulnerable population to arsenic and other unknown hazardous substances. An updated Phase I and additional Phase II assessment work is needed to determine the full scope and scale of contamination of the entire site, and

⁸ <https://www.railstotrails.org/resource-library/resources/longleaf-trace/>

⁹ <https://www.edaychristmas.com/prentiss-institute>

¹⁰ <https://www.lostcolleges.com/prentiss-institute>

¹¹ <https://www.10mostms.com/listings-entry/2021-kktf7>

cleanup planning and reuse strategy visioning is necessary to allow the site to be redeveloped as an integral part of the Cultural, Arts, and Innovation District in this area.

1.d. Identify Additional Sites

SMPDD will support additional assessments after priority sites are advanced using a transparent site identification process: community nominations; review of vacant/tax-delinquent properties; historic land-use screening; coordination with MDEQ; and evaluation against readiness and community-benefit criteria. A documented ranking system will prioritize sites based on eligibility, redevelopment readiness, human health/environmental concern, leverage potential, and community benefit—ensuring defensible, transparent selection decisions. From MDEQ’s Brownfield Inventory (CERCLA/USS and UST Closed-In-Place and Out-of-Service Indefinitely), we have a preliminary SMPDD brownfield inventory of 37 brownfields along the 44-mile Longleaf Trace trail itself, including 10 in Prentiss and 8 in Bassfield which include former commercial and service properties that exhibit characteristics commonly associated with brownfields, including long-term vacancy, deteriorated structures, and suspected petroleum or industrial-related environmental concerns. In the broader SMPDD geographic area along the Longleaf Trace, candidate sites include a former grocery store in Melba with two abandoned USTs remaining in the ground on Hwy 42 and the former Sumrall Shell on Hwy 42 in Sumrall with an abandoned UST. Within the entire jurisdiction of SMPDD, there are 696 sites on MDEQ’s Brownfield inventory, broken down by county as follows: Covington (29), Forrest (85), George (9), Greene (4), Hancock (31), Harrison (137), Jackson (122), Jefferson Davis (62), Jones (80), Lamar (22), Marion (54), Pearl River (34), Perry (7), Stone (13), and Wayne (7). SMPDD’s previous Brownfield Assessment grants have identified over 30 additional brownfield sites in the SMPDD service area for possible future assessment, with more being submitted by the public and project stakeholders on a regular basis. These include old gas stations, dry cleaners, sites impacted by creosote, and auto repair garages, just to name a few historic site uses.

Revitalization of the Target Areas

1.e. Reuse Strategy and Alignment with Revitalization Plans

The coalition’s reuse strategy focuses on returning underutilized properties to productive use in ways that advance local revitalization goals, expand economic opportunity, and support corridor- and trail-oriented development. The Longleaf Trace corridor provides an organizing framework for this grant. The Trace is governed by the Pearl & Leaf Rivers Rails-to-Trails Recreational District under Mississippi Code §55-25-1 et seq. and supported by a dedicated local millage, reflecting sustained local commitment to recreation, economic development, and quality-of-life investments. The District’s long-term “Framework for the Future” emphasizes aggressive maintenance, resurfacing, expansion of trail and equestrian facilities, shoreline and ecological enhancements at the Denbury Beaver Pond, development of loops of interest, and continued public involvement and partner collaboration. By reducing uncertainty surrounding brownfields identified along the corridor, the coalition will help protect and amplify long-term public investment in trail-related infrastructure and facilities while strengthening adjacent redevelopment opportunities.

Target Area 1 Town of Prentiss: The reuse strategy in Prentiss focuses on returning underutilized downtown parcels to productive reuse along Main Street and at the Prentiss Gateway Entrance (the northern trailhead of the Longleaf Trace) and captures existing visitor activity. Reuse plans for the priority site include restoration of the historic building, incorporating a fast charging EV station and a solar panel array with USB charging tables for visitors. Clearing environmental uncertainties for the priority and candidate sites will enable trail-supportive redevelopment such as small retail, food service, outfitter/bike-repair services, and other downtown commercial uses that serve residents and trail users. This approach aligns with local priorities to strengthen the downtown core and leverage the Trail as a sustained economic and quality-of-life investment.

Target Area 2 Town of Bassfield: Bassfield’s reuse strategy targets the Hawkins Avenue corridor to stabilize underutilized commercial properties and create conditions for private reinvestment that complements the Longleaf Trace. By assessing King’s Gin and other corridor sites, the Town will remove due-diligence barriers on sites that are vacant or underused and support redevelopment for trail-oriented commercial services and flexible reuse (e.g., small retail/food service, visitor services, and compatible light industrial/storage). This strategy leverages the Trail’s existing economic draw and reinforces Bassfield’s downtown revitalization priorities.

Target Area 3 SMPDD - St. Stephens Road Area: The reuse strategy for the Prentiss Institute campus is to complete environmental due diligence and targeted planning so the property can transition from vacancy and deterioration to a feasible, community-supported reuse concept that preserves key historic resources and supports heritage tourism, education/workforce activities, recreation, and compatible mixed-use campus. Plans will incorporate floodplain considerations and focus reuse concepts on practical footprints and improvements that reduce long-term maintenance burdens and strengthen local resilience. The site’s designation as a priority historic resource underscores the need for timely assessment and planning to unlock future investment.

Target Area 4 SMPDD - Mobile St/TFR Community: The Twin Forks Rising Community 2013 Master Plan, a revitalization plan for the community, specifically identified the Meridian Fertilizer Plant priority site as an environmental threat to the community and indicated that MDEQ intended to complete a Phase II ESA. Although some assessments have been performed, more assessments are needed before redevelopment of this site can occur. The final TFR Phase III Master Plan (July 2018) calls for the establishment of a Cultural, Arts, and Innovation District, which would surround and include the Meridian Fertilizer Plant. The District will draw on the community's roots as a culturally rich African-American community. This vision requires repurposing vacant space and underutilized properties like the Meridian Fertilizer Plant. Additional assessments and planning activities funded through this Assessment Grant for the Meridian Fertilizer Plant priority site would support and are in direct alignment with the TFR Community's primary goal of establishing this important Cultural, Arts, and Innovation District. Located within the 6th Street Museum District, within ¼ mile of the priority site is the African American Military Museum, a vibrant community center and the Historic Eureka School. Reuse planning in the Mobile Street/Twin Forks Rising Community will align with existing community redevelopment initiatives and focus on returning vacant and underutilized properties to productive use. Assessment and planning will support redevelopment strategies that reduce environmental uncertainty, improve site readiness, and advance implementation of the community's planned Cultural, Arts, and Innovation District. These grant-funded assessments and cleanup planning actions will help make the site market-ready and allow implementation of the Master Plan's redevelopment vision.

1.f. Outcomes and Benefits of Reuse Strategy

This coalition grant will reduce environmental uncertainty, improve marketability of priority properties, and enable communities to pursue cleanup funding and investment. Expected benefits include reinvestment in downtown corridors, improved public spaces, increased tax base, reduced blight, and redevelopment pathways that support energy efficiency and strengthen local resilience to extreme weather and natural hazards. Assessment activities are the necessary first step to make sites market-ready, reduce liability concerns, and unlock subsequent state, federal, and private resources.

Target Area 1 Town of Prentiss: In Prentiss, assessments will move priority downtown properties from "unknown" to "market-ready," enabling cleanup financing and private reinvestment. Expected outcomes include reduced blight near Main Street, increased reuse activity in the Trail gateway area, and improved potential for small business occupancy and local tax base growth. Because the Longleaf Trace drives the tourism marketability, clearing brownfield barriers in the downtown/trailhead area can help convert existing trail traffic into local spending and commercial reuse.

Target Area 2 Town of Bassfield: In Bassfield, assessment and cleanup planning for King's Gin and related corridor properties will reduce uncertainty that prevents reinvestment along Hawkins Avenue. Expected outcomes include removal of redevelopment barriers, creation of viable cleanup/reuse pathways, and improved prospects for downtown occupancy and trail-supportive commercial services. Reuse of underutilized corridor sites will help stabilize the community core and support redevelopment aligned with the trail's regional draw.

Target Area 3 SMPDD - St. Stephens Road Area: For the Prentiss Institute campus, the near-term benefit is a clear, defensible understanding of environmental conditions, constraints, and feasible redevelopment options for a large, complex historic property. Outcomes include reduced liability concerns, identification of practical reuse footprints that account for floodplain considerations, and a roadmap for staged redevelopment that can support heritage tourism, education/workforce uses, and recreation/greenway amenities while strengthening local resilience. While the St. Stephens Road Target Area is defined as the census block containing the corridor, the site's impacts and redevelopment benefits extend to nearby neighborhoods in Prentiss and across Jefferson Davis County through community services, access and public safety considerations.

Target Area 4 SMPDD - Mobile St/TFR Community: The Meridian Fertilizer priority site was specifically identified by MDEQ in 2018 as a significant threat to human health and the environment. This grant will complete the due diligence needed to define the nature and extent of impacts, evaluate exposure pathways, and produce cleanup alternatives and reuse-ready planning consistent with the TFR Master Plan. In the Mobile Street / Twin Forks Rising Community, assessment and planning will reduce uncertainty associated with legacy industrial uses, support cleanup and reuse decision-making, and advance redevelopment consistent with community priorities, improving site readiness and long-term redevelopment potential within the target area.

Strategy for Leveraging Resources

1.g. Resources Needed for Site Reuse

The following established Mississippi programs provide leverage funding opportunities for environmental remediation at Brownfield sites and are coordinated by MDEQ. These additional funding sources and incentives can help offset the additional costs associated with brownfield redevelopment due to cleanup and other hurdles. The *Mississippi Economic Redevelopment Act* promotes redevelopment by incentivizing clean-up of contaminated

property. Brownfield assessment and redevelopment planning can lead to approval of a remediation plan by MDEQ. After that, the program allows sales, income and franchise taxes to be deposited into a special fund used to reimburse developers for approved cleanup costs. Brownfield assessment and redevelopment planning can also incentivize participation in the **Mississippi Brownfields Program**. By enrolling in the program, a property owner can get an income tax credit equal to 25% of the costs of assessment, investigation, remediation, monitoring, and related activities at a Brownfield agreement site, with the annual credit capped at \$40,000, and the total credit not to exceed \$150,000. The property owner may claim a job tax credit for each new employee created as a result of redevelopment. The program also offers CERCLA liability protection. SMPDD operates an award-winning **Commercial Revitalization Program** that allows private developers to apply to the local government for a redevelopment grant/tax reimbursement to incentivize the reuse of existing, vacant commercial buildings. Utilizing a Tri-Party Agreement, the funding comes from the general fund of the municipality and is based on the increase in sales and/or property tax that results from site reuse. The Program can be used to reimburse the improvements made to the building that results in the reuse of the site. Hattiesburg established preapproved reimbursement-rate zones to encourage the use of the Program within areas of high poverty rates and limited redevelopment capacity, including the TFR target area. Existing leveraging includes: **Target Area 1 Town of Prentiss**: Use of SMPDD’s Commercial Revitalization Program (Tri-Party model) and local redevelopment tools to incentivize reuse of vacant downtown commercial properties once environmental conditions are clarified; coordination with MDEQ and MDA and state incentive programs to reduce liability and support eligible redevelopment financing. **Target Area 2 Town of Bassfield**: Coordination with MDEQ, MDA, the City, and private developers on the use of the Mississippi Economic Redevelopment Act (MERA) and applicable state incentive programs to support reinvestment in the Hawkins Avenue corridor; use of SMPDD’s Commercial Revitalization Program and related local tools to help incentivize rehabilitation of vacant commercial buildings once cleanup pathways are defined. **Target Area 3 St. Stephens Road Area**: Pursuit of historic preservation and rehabilitation resources where eligible (paired with environmental due diligence), and coordination with MDEQ voluntary cleanup mechanisms to reduce liability and support future investment for adaptive reuse. **Target Area 4 Mobile St/TFR Community**: In 2018 Hattiesburg seeded TFR CDC \$300,000 to ensure their viability and demonstrate commitment to comprehensive redevelopment of the TFR area. TFR CDC has successfully created the TFR Qualified Opportunity Zone Fund I (the first in the state) and combined with new market and low-income tax credits, as well as local financial tax vehicles, will pursue qualified developers to implement redevelopment projects such as the Cultural, Arts, and Innovation District.

1.h. Use of Existing Infrastructure

All identified target areas and priority sites are served by existing street networks and have access to potable water. sanitary sewer. electrical service. and solid waste collection. These established infrastructure systems reduce redevelopment costs and increase the likelihood that assessed properties can transition to productive reuse without the need for major new public infrastructure investments. Where applicable, assessments will also consider infrastructure condition, capacity, and floodplain constraints to ensure that reuse concepts are feasible and aligned with existing systems.

2. COMMUNITY NEED AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community Need

2.a. The Community's Need for Funding

Small Population and Low-Income Indicators (Nation, State, Target Areas) ¹²						
Statistics	USA	MS	Prentiss TA	Bassfield TA	St. Stephens Road TA	Mobile St/ TFR TA
Total Population ¹³	331M	2.96M	976	192	9	1,979
Population below Poverty	12.4%	19.1%	24.4%	37.4%	25.0%	24.1%
Median Household Income	\$78,538	\$54,915	\$30,395	\$30,208	\$37,183	\$38,077
SNAP Households	12.8%	14.3%	22.3%	17.6%	20.2%	19.6%
Per Capita Income	\$43,289	\$30,529	\$19,658	\$17,882	\$24,065	\$36,493

Prentiss, Bassfield, and many communities across the SMPDD region are rural and economically constrained, with limited local revenue to fund environmental due diligence. Brownfields assessments are often a prerequisite to redevelopment financing, yet Phase I/II assessment costs are prohibitive for small jurisdictions and property owners. EPA Brownfields funding is therefore essential to remove barriers to reuse, reduce liability uncertainty, and catalyze reinvestment. This need is particularly acute for sites such as the Progress Grocery petroleum brownfield in Prentiss, where MDEQ has already accepted the site with a state petroleum determination letter so that the owner can focus funding on redevelopment. Economic indicators underscore the severity of this need.

¹² <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/profile>
¹³ 2020 Decennial Census

According to the 2019-2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates¹⁴, Mississippi has the lowest median household income in the nation (\$54,915). Mississippi also ranks last in the nation (#50) for economic hardship and food insecurity¹⁵. However, economic conditions in all four of the Brownfield target areas are even more strained. Median household incomes range from approximately \$30,200 to \$38,100, while poverty rates in the target areas exceed the state average by 125-200%. Rates of households receiving SNAP benefits are 1.4 to nearly 2 times the national average, reflecting the deeply low-income nature of these communities.

These economic challenges are compounded by extremely small population sizes, which significantly limit local capacity. Across SMPDD’s 15 county service area, 79% of municipalities have populations below 15,000. These small, low-income communities do not have the staffing or surplus funds required to manage complex environmental grants or initiate Brownfields assessments independently, and SMPDD (as a non-taxing authority) does not have the financial capacity to assess brownfield sites across its service area.

2.b. Health or Welfare of Sensitive Populations

Sensitive populations in the target areas include low-income households, elderly residents, children, and pregnant women, who are more susceptible to the health and safety impacts associated with brownfield sites. By identifying environmental conditions and enabling cleanup planning, the coalition will reduce potential exposures and support safer community land uses.

Due to the small populations within the target areas, site-specific data documenting greater-than-normal incidence of disease related to hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or petroleum are not available prior to assessment. However, exposure pathways commonly associated with brownfield sites, such as direct contact, inhalation, and vapor intrusion, are linked to adverse health outcomes, including cancer, asthma, liver and kidney damage, and premature death.

As subsets of Mississippi, the target areas reflect broader statewide health sensitivities. According to 2019-2023 ACS estimates, the target areas of Prentiss, Bassfield, the St. Stephens Road area, and the Mobile St/TFR Community include substantial proportions of elderly residents (age 65 and over) and children under age 10, comprising 25%, 42%, 34%, and 24% of the respective populations. Statewide reproductive indicators further underscore the presence of sensitive populations. Mississippi’s overall fertility rate (59.2 births per 1,000 reproductive aged women) exceeds the national rate (53.8 per 1,000), and the state’s teen birth rate (24.9 per 1,000) is nearly double the national rate (12.6 per 1,000)¹⁶, indicating a higher concentration of pregnant women and infants relative to national norms. Further compounding these sensitivities, in Jefferson Davis County and Forrest County, where the target areas are located, the percentage of uninsured adults at or below 138% the federal poverty limit is nearly 25%, which is around 1.2 times the national rate (20%).

Vacant and deteriorated properties associated with brownfield sites can contribute to safety concerns and reduced neighborhood conditions. Assessment of the brownfield properties located within the target areas is a critical first step toward identifying environmental conditions and improving the quality of life for our most sensitive populations.

2.c. Greater Than Normal Incidence of Disease and Adverse Health Conditions^{17, 18}

Statistics	USA	MS	Prentiss TA	Bassfield TA	St. Stephens Road TA	Mobile St/TFR TA
Asthma (Adults) ¹⁹	7.0%	9.3%	10.9%	11.1%	10.9%	10.9%
Cancer (new cases/100,000 ppl) ²⁰	442.3	472.8	474.8	474.8	474.8	511.5
Lung Cancer (Cases /100,000 ppl) ²¹	49.4	68.3	67.3	67.3	67.3	79.3
Obesity ²¹	34.2%	40.6%	47.0%	47.4%	45.8%	43.6%
Heart Disease	4.4%	4.8%	10.4%	9.7%	7.1%	6.9%
COPD	6.5%	7.4%	12.2%	11.1%	10.9%	10.9%

While site-specific exposure pathways will be evaluated through assessment results post-award, rural communities facing persistent poverty often experience increased vulnerability to health burdens. The coalition will coordinate with public health stakeholders as appropriate and will use assessment findings to support informed risk communication and redevelopment decisions. Across all target areas, rates of chronic disease and adverse health conditions exceed both state and national averages, indicating elevated baseline health sensitivity among local populations. Adult asthma prevalence in the target areas (10.9–11.1%) is approximately 1.5 times the national

¹⁴ <https://data.census.gov/profile>

¹⁵ www.americashealthrankings.org

¹⁶ CDC - National Center for Health Statistics <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/state-stats/states/ms.html>

¹⁷ <https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/brfssprevalence/>

¹⁸ CDC - 2025 data from PLACES: Local Data for Better Health <https://www.cdc.gov/places>

¹⁹ CDC- 2021 data from the National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network ephrtracking.cdc.gov

²⁰ <https://gis.cdc.gov/Cancer/USCS/>

²¹ <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>

average, increasing vulnerability to air-quality and exposure-related stressors. Cancer incidence is consistently higher in the target areas than both Mississippi and U.S. averages, with the Mobile Street / TFR area showing the highest burden. Cardiovascular and respiratory conditions (heart disease and COPD) are substantially elevated, particularly in Prentiss and Bassfield, where rates are more than double national levels. Mississippi's rate of low birth weight significantly exceeds the national average, reflecting broader maternal and infant health stressors in the region. Obesity prevalence in all target areas exceeds the already-high state average, reinforcing the presence of compounded health vulnerabilities.

According to America's Health Rankings, Mississippi ranks last nationally (#50) in adult obesity; however, obesity prevalence in each of the Brownfield target areas is even higher than the state rate, ranging from 43.6% to 47.4%, compared to 40.6% statewide and 34.2% nationally. Mississippi is also ranked near the bottom nationally for preventable hospitalizations, premature death, and has the worst infant mortality rate²² (9.7) in the nation (5.5), underscoring the compounded health sensitivity facing residents in the target areas.

2.d. Economically Impoverished/Disproportionately Impacted Populations

Legacy disinvestment, environmental uncertainty, and repeated economic shocks have constrained redevelopment across the coalition's target areas in Prentiss, Bassfield, the St. Stephens Road corridor, and the Mobile Street/Twin Forks Rising (TFR) community. These areas exhibit poverty rates well above state and national averages and are *located within census tracts identified as high-poverty areas and counties classified as experiencing persistent poverty* by the U.S. Economic Development Administration. As a result, local governments and property owners have limited capacity to independently fund environmental assessments, cleanup planning, or redevelopment activities. Economic performance indicators further demonstrate the severity and persistence of these conditions. Using a nationally recognized index²³ developed by the Economic Innovation Group—which evaluates income, employment, housing vacancy, and recent economic change—Mississippi ranks among the states with the highest share of residents living in low-performing ZIP codes. ZIP codes encompassing Prentiss and the St. Stephens Road TA (score 91.0), Bassfield (89.9), and Hattiesburg (94.5) fall within the **lowest-performing tier nationally**, reflecting long-term disinvestment, limited employment opportunities, and constrained private capital availability.

In **Prentiss and Bassfield**, extremely small population sizes and limited local revenue significantly restrict municipal capacity to address environmental uncertainty associated with former service stations, industrial properties, and agricultural support sites. Vacant and deteriorated brownfield properties contribute to visible blight along Main Street corridors and near the Longleaf Trace, discourage private investment, and reduce access to economic opportunity and community services. Without assessment funding to clarify environmental conditions and liability concerns, these properties remain effectively frozen from productive reuse.

The **St. Stephens Road target area**, located just outside the Prentiss city limits, reflects similar patterns of long-term disinvestment, affecting historically significant properties and surrounding rural communities. Environmental uncertainty associated with aging structures and legacy land uses limits the ability to stabilize and adaptively reuse these sites in ways that preserve cultural resources while protecting public health and environmental quality.

In the **Mobile Street/TFR Community** in Hattiesburg, decades of industrial activity combined with flood risk and prolonged vacancy have resulted in multiple environmentally complex sites within an already economically distressed area. Vacant industrial parcels, including the former Meridian Fertilizer Plant, constrain implementation of the community's revitalization vision and exacerbate challenges related to housing quality, employment access, and neighborhood conditions. Portions of this target area are currently used by unhoused individuals, further elevating concerns regarding potential exposure to hazardous substances.

Across all target areas, the interaction of persistent poverty, limited access to capital, and unresolved environmental conditions creates a reinforcing cycle in which redevelopment is delayed, risks remain uncharacterized, and economic opportunity is suppressed. EPA Brownfields assessment funding is essential to interrupt this cycle by providing the technical foundation needed to evaluate environmental conditions, reduce liability uncertainty, and enable locally supported redevelopment consistent with adopted plans and community priorities.

Community Engagement

Sections 2.e. and 2.f. have been consolidated in the following table.

2.e. Project Involvement and 2.f. Project Roles

SMPDD will replicate and expand upon the community engagement framework successfully implemented under its prior Brownfields work. Partnerships have been sought with specific groups who are already engaged in the target areas. **A Brownfields Steering Committee (BSC) will guide engagement and site prioritization and will include**

²² https://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/index.cfm?29,21453,299,pdf/Infant_Mortality_Report_2025.pdf

²³ <https://eig.org/dci-hub/>

representatives designated by non-lead members Prentiss and Bassfield, leaders of various community organizations from the Target Areas and throughout our region, as well as SMPDD Economic/Workforce Development Division staff. To meet EPA eligibility determinations and site access readiness, SMPDD will provide draft prioritization criteria, site lists and forms for review and comment by Coalition and BSC Members prior to finalization. The BSC will meet regularly throughout the project to: solicit site nominations; apply the ranking criteria; review assessment progress; discuss cleanup alternatives and reuse strategies; and ensure each coalition member’s community receives direct benefit. The following organizations represent a wide array of partners that will be engaged from the outset and continuously throughout the grant period. More may be added as the project progresses.

Name of Organization and Mission <i>*Community Based Organization</i>	Point of Contact <i>(name and email)</i>	Specific Involvement in the project or assistance
MS Department of Environmental Quality – safeguard the health, safety, and welfare of Mississippians by conserving and improving our environment and fostering wise economic growth	[REDACTED]	Technical assistance, QAPP review/approval; eligibility coordination; cleanup standards and voluntary cleanup options
Jefferson Davis County Economic Development District - Bringing jobs, industry and commerce to Jefferson Davis County	[REDACTED]	BSC; redevelopment feasibility input; prospective purchaser and developer
Mississippi Heritage Trust* - Save and renew places meaningful to Mississippians and their history	[REDACTED]	BS; historic site expertise; guidance on preservation-compatible reuse options
Town of Bassfield – Local Government, Non-Lead Coalition Partner	[REDACTED]	BSC, site nominations; access coordination; local planning context and outreach support
Town of Prentiss – Local Government, Non-Lead Coalition Partner	[REDACTED]	BSC, site nominations; access coordination; local planning context and outreach support
City of Hattiesburg - Local Government	[REDACTED]	BSC; Site inventory; coordination with community redevelopment initiatives
Longleaf Trace Board of Directors* - To create economic benefits while providing multiple recreational opportunities and an improved quality of life for its citizens and the State of MS.	[REDACTED]	Trail-adjacent site input; reuse planning aligned with corridor investments
Prentiss Institute Board of Trustees* - ensure that the historic institution continues to be a venue to serve the community interest	[REDACTED]	BSC; site history; access coordination; preservation-aligned reuse input
Twin Forks Rising Community Development Corporation* - Holistic redevelopment of TFR community (Ward 2, Hattiesburg, MS)	[REDACTED]	Community outreach; stakeholder input; reuse planning aligned with community initiatives

SMPDD’s Board of Directors meets quarterly and includes elected officials and community leaders from across our service area who support redevelopment and serve as local liaisons. Board members will help share project updates through their networks and assist SMPDD with identifying candidate sites and connecting the project team with property owners and local stakeholders as needed.

2.g. Incorporating Community Input

The BSC, consisting of SMPDD staff, and the key project partners, will lead a Community Outreach Program that will inform, update and solicit community input. A Community Involvement Plan will be prepared at the start of the project. The primary communication tool will be a Brownfield Project website, which will include details of important project milestones, site inventory lists, assessment and cleanup results, and planned redevelopment. It will share community meetings, press releases, and project partners, and facilitate receiving input by providing contact information and feedback forms. The BSC will solicit and document community input that directly informs site ranking, assessment sequencing, and reuse vision priorities through public meetings and stakeholder interviews. Additional inputs from the community will be invited through town hall presentations. Meetings will be held in person when possible, and virtual options will be offered to increase participation and reduce travel and schedule barriers. Project partners will help to advertise and populate the meetings and presentations. Stakeholder interviews will be another important tool used to gather community inputs and feedback. To communicate project

progress and gather feedback, the BSC will meet with project partners and residents’ groups at relevant milestones, as needed. Updates will be given at City Council meetings, in town hall meetings, on community partners’ websites and social media pages, through press releases to local newspapers, and via the Brownfield Project website. Flyers will be mailed to those residents and businesses most closely affected by the properties in this project, especially in low-income areas where Internet access is limited. Community feedback will be solicited with all project updates, and will be taken via face-to-face meetings, electronic meetings, phone calls, emails, and web forms. Questions and concerns will be addressed by the most appropriate project partner in a timely manner. In an effort to bridge language barriers that may exist, SMPDD has existing partnerships with Spanish and Vietnamese interpreters available to provide services as needed.

3. TASK DESCRIPTIONS, COST ESTIMATES, AND MEASURING PROGRESS

Description of Tasks/Activities and Outputs

SMPDD has carefully evaluated and planned activities to ensure they are eligible for reimbursement and appropriate to project goals. We will prioritize the sites in the target areas before assisting others. We will use our extensive in-house grant management, planning, and economic development skills, and access to other partner resources to augment the EPA grant funds to spur redevelopment in our jurisdiction. SMPDD will assess at least two sites in each coalition member’s geographic boundary (Prentiss, Bassfield, and SMPDD lead target areas).

Sections 3.a., 3.b., 3.c., and 3.d. have been consolidated in the following table. 3.e. is discussed below.

Task 1. Program Management
3.a. Project Implementation: Grant oversight and correspond with EPA (Quarter 1-16); Develop and monitor the Grant Work Plan (Q1, updated as needed); Issue appropriate procurement solicitation for contractors to perform work under the grant (Q1); Finalize scope and terms with environmental professional selected through the procurement process, Kickoff Meeting with Project Partners and contractors to finalize agreements, and discuss roles and expectations (Q1); Participate in regularly scheduled team meetings with EPA, MDEQ, and contractors (anticipated Monthly); ACRES updates (Monthly); Financial tracking and reports (Quarterly/Annually); Final Report (Q16); and Attend two brownfields conferences, National and/or Regional (Pending EPA Schedule)
3.b. Project Schedule: Q1-16 as indicated above
3.c. Task/Activity Lead: SMPDD, with reporting assistance from QEP
3.d. Outputs: Grant Work Plan, 16 Quarterly reports, 4 annual reports, 1 final report
Task 2. Site Inventory and Community Outreach
3.a. Project Implementation: Establish a Community Involvement Plan (Q1, updated as needed); Hold meetings with partners and MDEQ to review sites, environmental records, reuse potential, developer interest, and goals alignment (as needed); Site inventory, selection, and prioritization (Q1, updated monthly); Attend community meetings (Q1-Q16); Prepare community educational materials-press releases, flyers/mailers (as needed); Website and social media work (Q1, updated as needed); Collect and respond to community feedback (Q1-Q16)
3.b. Project Schedule: Q1-16 as indicated above
3.c. Task/Activity Lead: Brownfields Steering Committee (includes SMPDD staff)
3.d. Outputs: Brownfields Project website, 6 community meetings, 5 press releases, 5 flyers, site inventory
Task 3. Environmental Assessments (ESAs)
3.a. Project Implementation: Create Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) (Q1); Conduct: 20 Phase I ESAs (4 Priority Sites, 16 additional sites), to begin after site inventory is approved by BSC (Priority Sites by Q4. Additional sites by Q14); 10 Phase II ESAs, including Site Specific Sampling and Analysis Plans (SAPs), upon completion of Phase I ESA for the site (Priority Sites by Q4. All by Q15); Conduct 4 Supplemental Assessments (e.g. targeted supplemental sampling/delineation to refine the extent of contamination) (by Q15)
3.b. Project Schedule: Q1-16 as indicated above
3.c. Task/Activity Lead: QEP with SMPDD oversight
3.d. Outputs: 1 QAPP, 20 Phase I ESAs, 10 Phase II ESAs, 4 Supplemental Assessments including Site Specific SAPs
Task 4. Eligible Planning Activities
3.a. Project Implementation: Identify cleanup options and costs, to begin after a Phase II ESA is completed (Priority sites by Q5. All completed by Q16); Develop 8 Analysis of Brownfields Cleanup Alternatives (ABCAs), to begin after cleanup identification is completed (Priority sites by Q6. All completed by Q16); Create 4 Corrective Action Plans, 2 Brownfield Revitalization Plans, and 3 Site Reuse Visions, to begin after assessment and ABCA is completed and may include eligible reuse planning, infrastructure evaluation, market viability study, site disposition strategy, or VCP Program enrollment (All activities completed Q16)
3.b. Project Schedule: Q1-16 as indicated above
3.c. Task/Activity Lead: ABCA, etc - QEP with SMPDD oversight; Planning - SMPDD Staff with QEP support
3.d. Outputs: Site Specific: 8 ABCAs, 4 Corrective Action Plans (CAPs), Eligible Planning: 2 Infrastructure Evaluations, 1 Evaluation of Market Viability, 2 Brownfield Revitalization Plans, and 3 Site Reuse Visions

3.e. Cost Estimates

Budget Categories		Task 1: Program Management	Task 2: Community Outreach	Task 3: Assessments	Task 4: Eligible Planning	Total Admin Costs	Total Programmatic Costs
Direct Costs	Personnel	\$31,500.00	\$31,500.00	\$0.00	\$70,000.00	\$0.00	\$133,000.00
	Fringe Benefits	\$10,552.50	\$10,552.50	\$0.00	\$23,450.00	\$0.00	\$44,555.00
	Travel	\$7,300.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$7,300.00
	Supplies	\$0.00	\$656.24	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$656.24
	Contractual	\$36,000.00	\$32,000.00	\$866,500.00	\$331,600.00	\$0.00	\$1,266,100.00
	Other	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$4,000.00	\$0.00	\$4,000.00
Total Direct Costs		\$85,352.50	\$74,708.74	\$866,500.00	\$429,050.00	\$0.00	\$1,455,611.24
Total Indirect Costs		\$10,513.13	\$10,513.13	\$0.00	\$23,362.50	\$44,388.76*	\$0.00
Total Budget		\$95,865.63	\$85,221.87	\$866,500.00	\$452,412.50	\$1,500,000.00	

*Admin Costs at 2.96% (less than 5%)

Cost estimates were developed from experience with our previous Assessment Grants. Also, Kristyn Gunter, Program Manager, has experience in conducting assessments and has an understanding of the costs associated with them. Consistent with EPA’s preference for Assessment projects, SMPDD’s budget prioritizes site-specific assessments and cleanup planning. Approximately **70.4% of requested funds are directed to Phase I/II assessment and site-specific cleanup planning deliverables**, exceeding EPA’s 60% benchmark for favorable evaluation. *Administrative Costs* (Total: \$44,388.76): are for financial management support, financial reporting, recordkeeping, and compliance activities and are **2.96% (less than five percent 5%)** of total EPA-requested funds and are shown as “Indirect Costs” and are calculated as 25% of the sum of Personnel + Fringe. A copy of our Indirect Cost Rate Agreement is included as an attachment to this Narrative. Remaining funds support required project management, reporting, and community engagement activities that ensure the work is completed on schedule and results in implementable reuse outcomes. Management personnel and fringe costs are for performance tracking, QEP oversight and direction, assessment reviews and coordination, and reporting and are not subject to the 5% administrative cost limitation. Funds directly allocated to assessments are calculated at 57.8%, and **30.2% is allocated to all planning activities**.

Task 1: Program Management: \$95,865.63 (6.4% of total) – Personnel/Fringe: 450 hrs x \$93.45/hr = \$42,052.50; Travel: Mileage \$2,000 (2,500 mi x \$0.80 or approved Federal Mileage rate), 1 staff x 2 conferences x \$2,650ea per conference = \$5,300 [includes flight (\$1000), hotel (\$250/ea x 4 nights), meals (\$100/day x 4 days), registration (\$250)]4; Contractual: 180 hrs x \$200/hr = \$36,000; Indirect (Admin): \$42,052.50 x 25%=\$10,513.13.

Task 2: Community Outreach \$85,221.87 (5.7% of total) - Personnel/Fringe: 450 hrs x \$93.45/hr = \$42,052.50; Supplies Costs: BSC/community meeting materials = \$656.24; Contractual Costs: 160 hrs x \$200/hr = \$32,000; Indirect (Admin): \$42,052.50 x 25%=\$10,513.13

Task 3: Assessments \$866,500 (57.8% of total) - Contractual Costs: Generic QAPP for Phase II ESAs = \$6,500. 20 Phase I ESAs at avg \$7,000ea (includes lien search back to 1980 for each parcel and AAI checklist) = \$140,000. 10 Phase II ESAs at avg \$60,000ea = \$600,000. Each will include Site Specific Sampling & Analysis Plan, Health & Safety Plan, Eligibility Determination. 4 Supplemental Assessments for additional sampling at avg \$30,000ea = \$120,000.

Task 4: Planning \$452,412.50 (30.2% of total) – Personnel/Fringe: 1,000 hrs x \$93.45/hr = \$93,450; Contractual Costs: 8 Analysis of Brownfield Cleanup Alternative Plans at avg \$6,800ea = \$54,400; 4 Corrective Action Plans at \$7,800ea = \$31,200; 2 Brownfield Revitalization Plans at \$70,000 ea = \$140,000; 3 Site Reuse Visions at \$8,000ea = \$24,000; 2 Infrastructure Evaluations at \$15,000 ea = \$30,000; 1 Evaluation of Market Viability at \$52,000; Other: MDEQ Voluntary Cleanup Program – Brownfield Application fee for 2 sites at \$2,000ea = \$4,000; Indirect (Admin): \$93,450 x 25%=\$23,362.50

3.f. Plan to Measure and Evaluate Environmental Progress and Results

SMPDD will develop a project work plan with a milestones and deliverables chart to track and measure progress. Project management will be managed with software to assist tracking efforts. A budget will be developed and costs will be tracked monthly to ensure project progress is in line with spending and budgets. SMPDD will require the selected environmental professional to provide a schedule of milestones, budgets and deliverables with monthly updates to integrate into monthly project tracking. Updates will be provided to EPA via the ACRES database. When measures or timeline milestones are not being met, the project manager will meet with EPA, project partners and the environmental professional to evaluate problems, find solutions, and identify steps to regain timeline losses and/or adjust the project as needed to meet expectations. The outputs defined in the project plan will be tracked and entered into ACRES on a regular basis. SMPDD will also track outcomes to facilitate EPA’s Strategic Plan. Outcomes such as the number and sizes of sites made available for reuse, jobs created, dollars leveraged, local government use, greenspace made available, energy efficiency measures implemented, and more will be entered

into ACRES. Problems will be reported immediately and project management will realign the project plan as needed to redirect work and get back on track efficiently.

4. PROGRAMMATIC CAPABILITY AND PAST PERFORMANCE

Programmatic Capability

Sections 4.a., 4.b., and 4.c. have been consolidated in the following section:

4.a. Organizational Capacity, 4.b. Organizational Structure, and 4.c. Description of Key Staff –

SMPDD staff has an extensive and proven track record of managing Federal and State funded programs for a multitude of agencies. We have historically met all grant requirements because we turned in our reports on time, achieved the goals, and met the terms and conditions of the grants that we have managed and implemented. SMPDD staff routinely manages over \$40M annually in federal and state funded programs, from inception to closeout, and has the capacity to carry out the programmatic, administrative and financial requirements of the Brownfield Assessment grant. SMPDD staff will oversee the implementation of the project. SMPDD will serve as the grant recipient and fiscal agent and will administer funds on behalf of coalition members through established grant management, procurement, and reporting procedures. The BSC will provide structured advisory input to ensure each coalition members target area receives meaningful involvement in determining how grant funds will benefit their communities and will include SMPDD staff and designated representatives from each non-lead coalition member. The BSC will meet on a regular schedule to confirm site priorities and review progress and deliverables. Decisions affecting scope, site prioritization, and sequencing will be documented in meeting notes.

Kristyn Gunter, Special Projects Division Director, will serve as the Brownfield Program Manager. She holds a Master's in Business Administration and is a Qualified Environmental Professional, working as an environmental consultant for 14 years, conducting Phase I and II ESAs, prior to joining SMPDD. She has served as the Brownfield Grant Program Manager for SMPDD's previous EPA Brownfield Assessment Grants and will be responsible for day-to-day program management, implementation and oversight. **Allison Hawkins**, the Economic/Workforce Development Division Director, has over 30 years' experience in economic and community development, and will oversee the eligible brownfield planning activities and will serve as Alternate Program Manager if needed. She will also assist with community engagement. **Jennifer Bell, CPA, CFA**, the Chief Financial Officer for SMPDD, oversees all financial aspects of the agency and will continue her role with managing the financial aspects of the grant. Additional SMPDD staff are qualified and available as necessary.

4.d. Acquiring Additional Resources

Contractors: SMPDD has not procured contractual services at this time. **Sub recipient:** SMPDD does not have a named sub recipient for this grant. SMPDD routinely procures services from contractors for various grants and programs that we oversee and plans to retain consultants to assist us with grant management, community outreach, assessment and planning activities. SMPDD will fully comply with the fair and open competition procurement standards in 2CFR Part 200, 2CFR Part 1500 and 40CFR Part 33, following the 6 good faith efforts and will include price as a factor. SMPDD will administer contractor engagement using executed contractual instruments that specify performance expectations, milestones, schedules, and billing protocols. Ongoing oversight will include systematic review of work products, routine coordination with contractors, and confirmation of contractual and regulatory compliance prior to invoice approval. Project implementation will incorporate, to the extent allowable under procurement regulations, a preference for local workforce utilization and sourcing.

Past Performance and Accomplishments

4.e. Currently Has or Previously Received an EPA Brownfields Grant

SMPDD was awarded an FY19 Community Wide Assessment Grant (BF00D94719), in the amount of \$300,000 and an FY23 Community Wide Assessment Grant (BF02D62823) in the amount of \$494,000. **(1) Accomplishments** Cumulatively, under both grants (as of the date of application submission), SMPDD assessed 19 sites and conducted: 18 Phase I ESAs, 12 Phase II ESAs, and removed 6 abandoned USTs to conduct sampling as required for full assessment. An Infrastructure Evaluation was completed for one (1) site and 4 ABCAs were prepared. The assessment work conducted resulted in the issuance of 4 No Further Action Letters from the MDEQ, causing 11 sites totaling **approximately 68.41 acres** of brownfields to be available for anticipated use. Leveraged dollars include \$1,221,512 in cleanup funds for demolition, site grading and planting at 2 sites. All accomplishments are accurately reflected in ACRES. **(2) Compliance with Grant Requirements** SMPDD has demonstrated a history of timely and acceptable quarterly performance and grant deliverables, ongoing ACRES reporting, and compliance with our workplan, schedule, and terms and conditions under our previous Assessment grants. Our FY19 grant was completed on time and on budget. Despite every effort made to expend all funds, due to the unforeseen debilitating challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which we faced **during more than 80% of our grant period**, \$2,739.13 (0.9%) of the \$300,000 grant was unexpended at the end of the grant period. SMPDD currently has an open FY23 Assessment Grant, in the amount of \$494,000 and is on budget and ahead of schedule. **As of 09/30/2025 84.3% of our FY23 grant funds had been expended** through ASAP.

Threshold Criteria for Assessment Coalition Grants

Below are the Southern Mississippi Planning and Development District's (SMPDD) Threshold Criteria Responses for the Assessment Coalition Grant application.

(1) Eligibility of Lead and Non-Lead Coalition Members

Lead Member – Southern Mississippi Planning and Development District

Non-Lead Member – Town of Prentiss

Non-Lead Member – Town of Bassfield

(1) A Applicant Type and Information

- The **Southern Mississippi Planning and Development District** is the **Lead member** of the coalition. SMPDD is a designated 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit organization serving the southern 15 counties of the state of Mississippi and is eligible for funding. SMPDD, formerly known as the Southern Mississippi Economic Development District, was formed in 1966 for civic improvement and economic development, housing and other benevolent and/or charitable activities. SMPDD was designated as a “Regional Clearinghouse” by the Office of the Governor of the State of Mississippi by letter dated December 15, 1969, according to Title IV of the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act of 1968 and OMB Circular A-95. Executive Order number 81, dated June 11, 1971 designated the 15 county region as a Planning and Development District. Documentation of our eligibility is included on the following page.
- The **Town of Prentiss** is a **non-lead member** of the coalition. Prentiss is a municipality within the State of Mississippi and is eligible for funding.
- The **Town of Bassfield** is a **non-lead member** of the coalition. Bassfield is a municipality within the State of Mississippi and is eligible for funding.

(1) B. 501(c)(4) of the IRC

SMPDD and the Towns of Prentiss and Bassfield are eligible entities and are **NOT** exempt from Federal taxation under section 501(c)(4) of the IRC and do not lobby the Federal government.

The non-lead coalition members are not an agency or instrumentality of or affiliated with the lead member or the other non-lead coalition member.

(2) Target Areas

Each coalition member has a designated Target Area that serves as the focal point for brownfield assessment and revitalization activities. In accordance with EPA guidelines, the designated Target Areas do not overlap and are within at least three distinct municipalities.

Coalition Partner	Target Area and Geographic Boundary
Town of Prentiss (non-lead)	Town of Prentiss jurisdictional boundary
Town of Bassfield (non-lead)	Town of Bassfield jurisdictional boundary
SMPDD (lead)	St. Stephens Rd Area, Unincorporated Jefferson Davis County, Census Block 280659502024010
SMPDD (lead)	Mobile St/Twin Forks Rising Community, Hattiesburg, Census Tract 28035010700

(3) Non-lead Member(s) that Never Received an EPA MARC Grant

The Town of Prentiss and the Town of Bassfield, both non-lead members of the coalition, have not previously been awarded an EPA MARC grant.

(4) Legal Authority to Expend Grant Funds on Behalf of Non-Lead Coalition Members

- a. SMPDD, the lead member, has the authority to expend grant funds within our entire 15 County service area geographic boundary, which includes the Towns of Prentiss and Bassfield, located in Jefferson Davis County.
- b. Not applicable

(5) Coalition Agreement

Letters from the Towns of Prentiss and Bassfield agreeing to be part of the coalition are included on the next 2 pages. Following grant award, SMPDD will prepare a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for the Coalition members to execute in accordance with the terms and conditions issued by EPA for the FY26 Grant.

(6) Community Involvement

SMPDD will replicate and expand upon the community engagement framework successfully implemented under its prior Brownfields work. Partnerships have been sought with specific groups who are already engaged in the target areas. A [Brownfields Steering Committee \(BSC\)](#) will guide engagement and site prioritization and will include representatives designated by non-lead members Prentiss and Bassfield, leaders of various community organizations from the Target Areas and throughout our region, as well as SMPDD Economic/Workforce Development Division staff. To meet EPA eligibility determinations and site access readiness, SMPDD will provide draft prioritization criteria, site lists and forms for review and comment by Coalition and BSC Members prior to finalization. The BSC will meet regularly throughout the project to: solicit site nominations; apply the ranking criteria; review assessment progress; discuss cleanup alternatives and reuse strategies; and ensure each coalition member’s community receives direct benefit. The following organizations represent a wide array of partners that will be engaged from the outset and continuously throughout the grant period. More may be added as the project progresses.

Name of Organization and Mission <i>*Community Based Organization</i>	Point of Contact <i>(name and email)</i>	Specific Involvement in the project or assistance
MS Department of Environmental Quality – safeguard the health, safety, and welfare of Mississippians by conserving and improving our environment and fostering wise economic growth	Thomas Wallace twallace@mdeq.ms.gov	Technical assistance, QAPP review/approval; eligibility coordination; cleanup standards and voluntary cleanup options
Jefferson Davis County Economic Development District - Bringing jobs, industry and commerce to Jefferson Davis County	Gary Bass jdcecondev@gmail.com	BSC; redevelopment feasibility input; prospective purchaser and developer
Mississippi Heritage Trust* - Save and renew places meaningful to Mississippians and their history	Lolly Rash lolly@mississippiheritage.com	BS; historic site expertise; guidance on preservation-compatible reuse options
Town of Bassfield – Local Government, Non-Lead Coalition Partner	Angie Ladner speightsa22@gmail.com	BSC, site nominations; access coordination; local planning context and outreach support
Town of Prentiss – Local Government, Non-Lead Coalition Partner	Tony Waits tonywaits@gmail.com	BSC, site nominations; access coordination; local planning context and outreach support
City of Hattiesburg - Local Government	Ann Jones annjones@hattiesburgms.com	BSC; Site inventory; coordination with community redevelopment initiatives
Longleaf Trace Board of Directors* - To create economic benefits while providing multiple recreational opportunities and an improved quality of life for its citizens and the State of MS.	Dale Lucas dlucas@lamarcounty.com	Trail-adjacent site input; reuse planning aligned with corridor investments
Prentiss Institute Board of Trustees* - ensure that the historic institution continues to be a venue to serve the community interest	Bobby Rushing Bobbyrushing5@gmail.com	BSC; site history; access coordination; preservation-aligned reuse input
Twin Forks Rising Community Development Corporation* - Holistic redevelopment of TFR community (Ward 2, Hattiesburg, MS)	Andrea Graham, graham@tfrcdc.org	Community outreach; stakeholder input; reuse planning aligned with community initiatives

SMPDD’s Board of Directors meets quarterly and includes elected officials and community leaders from across our service area who support redevelopment and serve as local liaisons. Board members will help share project updates through their networks and assist SMPDD with identifying candidate sites and connecting the project team with property owners and local stakeholders as needed.

The BSC, consisting of SMPDD staff, and the key project partners, will lead a Community Outreach Program that will inform, update and solicit community input. A Community Involvement Plan will be prepared at the start of the project. The primary communication tool will be a Brownfield Project website, which will include details of important project milestones, site inventory lists, assessment and cleanup results, and planned redevelopment. It will share community meetings, press releases, and project partners, and facilitate receiving input by providing contact information and feedback forms. The BSC will solicit and document community input that directly informs site ranking, assessment sequencing, and reuse vision priorities through public meetings and stakeholder interviews. Additional inputs from the community will be invited through town hall presentations. Meetings will be held in person when possible, and virtual options will be offered to increase participation and reduce travel and schedule barriers. Project partners will help to advertise and populate the meetings and presentations. Stakeholder interviews will be another important tool used to gather community inputs and feedback. To communicate project progress and gather feedback, the BSC will meet with project partners and residents’ groups at relevant milestones, as needed. Updates will be given at City Council meetings, in town hall meetings, on community partners’ websites and social media pages, through press releases to local newspapers, and via the Brownfield Project website. Flyers will be mailed to those residents and businesses most closely affected by the properties in this project, especially in low-income areas where Internet access is limited. Community feedback will be solicited with all project updates, and will be taken via face-to-face meetings, electronic meetings, phone calls, emails, and web forms. Questions and concerns will be addressed by the most appropriate project partner in a timely manner. In an effort to bridge language barriers that may exist, SMPDD has existing partnerships with Spanish and Vietnamese interpreters available to provide services as needed.

(7) Expenditure of Existing Grant Funds

SMPDD currently has one (1) open FY23 EPA Brownfield Community Wide Assessment Grant in the amount of \$494,000. As of 09/30/2025, SMPDD had drawn down \$416,324.21 or **84.3% of our existing grant**, leaving an available balance of \$77,675.79. The Automated Standard Application for Payments report for 09/30/2025 is included below to demonstrate compliance with the drawdown requirement. Disbursement of drawn down funds is compliant with the requirements in EPA’s general terms and conditions for timely disbursement of funds.

Payment Transaction Confirmation

ASAP #11

Payment Request Sequence Number : 09-30-2025 05146207								
Payment Request Type : Individual								
Payment Method : ACH								
Bank Relationship : 065503348*****2483								
Requested Settlement Date : 09/30/2025								
Requested Date and Time : 09/30/2025:12:13								
Payment Justification : To reimburse contractual expenses through September 30, 2025								
Total Items : 1								
Recipient : SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI PLANNING (1140777)								
Federal Agency : RTPFC-Grants (68128933)								
Cash On Hand :			Total : \$67,894.59					
Seq # / Item #	Account ID	Account Status	Request Reference Number	Available Balance	Remittance Code	Remittance Amount	Amount Requested	Payment Request Status
00001/1	BF02D62823	Open	9-30-2025	\$77,675.79			\$67,894.59	Queued to be sent to ACH

(8) Contractors and Named Subrecipients

- **Contractors – Not Applicable.** No contractual services have been procured at this time.
- **Subrecipients – Not Applicable.** No subrecipients are named in this application.