



**Written Testimony of Veronica Eady on
“EPA’s Brownfields Program: Empowering Cleanup and
Encouraging Economic Redevelopment” before the
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Committee on Energy and Commerce
April 21, 2016**

My name is Veronica Eady, and I offer testimony today on behalf of the Conservation Law Foundation (CLF). I am Vice President and Director of CLF’s Massachusetts office.

Founded in 1966, Conservation Law Foundation is a member-supported environmental advocacy organization headquartered in Boston, Massachusetts. CLF protects New England’s environment for the benefit of all people. We use the law, science, and the market to create solutions that preserve our natural resources, build healthy communities, and sustain a vibrant economy.

I want to thank the Committee on Energy and Commerce for this opportunity to provide testimony during this hearing entitled “EPA’s Brownfields Program: Empowering Cleanup and Encouraging Economic Redevelopment.” We support, without reservation, the funding and implementation of EPA’s Brownfields Program.

Across the country, cities and towns are pockmarked with blighted properties that have been largely avoided because of real or perceived contamination and the uncertain legal liability arising from that contamination. Many brownfields sites in Massachusetts have contamination that pre-dates the Industrial Revolution, creating an acute challenge to remediating and returning brownfields properties into productive reuse.

Non-profit environmental organizations have long played a critical role in facilitating the cleanup of brownfields sites. My own organization, CLF (through our sister organization, CLF



Ventures), has convened community planning charettes to help residents articulate their vision for the redevelopment of longstanding contaminated sites. We have also provided technical assistance to cities and towns seeking to remediate sites and return them to economic activity, helping them to understand their legal options under state and federal brownfields laws. A founding member of the Massachusetts Smart Growth Alliance, we are working in broad coalition with other stakeholders to secure funding that would replenish the Massachusetts Brownfields Redevelopment Fund.

Last year CLF undertook a comprehensive investigation into the nature and extent of contamination in New Bedford, Massachusetts and what potential exposure residents might be subject to. We focused on an environmental justice analysis, which involved studying census and other demographic data to determine whether low-income communities and communities of color bear a disproportionate environmental burden. We spoke with nearly two dozen residents, city officials, environmental regulators, and others. Although New Bedford has received state and federal brownfields funding in the past, one city official commented that the biggest environmental justice issue challenge facing New Bedford today is continues to be the lack of funding available to identify more unaddressed contaminated sites.

New Bedford has pollution that dates back to the mid-1700s when the economy shifted to whaling and whaling-related industries, such as whale oil processing, soap-making, and ship-building. These early industries likely emitted into the environment oils, arsenic, mercury, cyanide, biological wastes, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), and other caustic substances that were disposed of directly into soils and waterways. When the whaling industry left, textiles manufacturers moved in a century later. And after the departure of the textile industry came the electronics industry with its own spectrum of pollution. Layer upon layer of



pollution in New Bedford, one of the nation's oldest and most iconic small cities, has led to a blighted city that is struggling to survive in today's economy.

Some of New Bedford's poorest residents live literally across the street from sites that have been mothballed because the industrial operations have been long gone for decades, and the city has been left holding the bag. In other cases, scores of households have been relocated due to migrating pollution from nearby brownfields. New Bedford also has two public schools sitting on a brownfields site. In response to a petition by teachers, staff, and faculty at one school, the state Department of Public Health undertook an investigation into possible exposure to PCBs – highly toxic polychlorinated biphenyls – that resulted in some classrooms being sealed off to protect against toxic gases that have entered the school through the building's ventilation system.

New Bedford is only one of many similarly situated cities and towns in Massachusetts and in the nation. Brownfields redevelopment is for many cities and towns the only form of developable property because of very limited inventories of undeveloped properties. And in order to develop these brownfields sites, cities and towns need access to funding to identify, assess, and clean up contaminated properties. Access to further federal brownfields funding would be a major step in assisting these communities, ultimately bringing jobs and revenue that would stimulate – and in cases like New Bedford could be a cornerstone of – local economies.

In conclusion and on behalf of the Conservation Law Foundation, I would like to thank the House Committee on Energy and Commerce for holding this hearing on EPA's Brownfields Program. A strong, fully funded brownfields program will give an invaluable leg-up to cities like New Bedford and bolster its local economy while advancing a safe and healthful environment.



Once again, I thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony before the House
Committee on Energy and Environment.

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