

**Chair Cathy McMorris Rodgers**  
**Opening Statement – Subcommittee on Environment, Manufacturing, and**  
**Critical Materials:**  
**“Revitalizing America through the Reauthorization of the Brownfields**  
**Program”**  
**September 27, 2023**  
*As prepared for delivery*

Thank you, Chairman.

Today, we are examining the EPA’s Brownfields program. This program was authorized under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980. It is commonly referred to as either CERCLA or “Superfund.”

A Brownfields site, as many of you know, is an abandoned or underutilized property with known or suspected contamination.

The risk of legal liability for existing contamination can discourage interested buyers from purchasing the property for redevelopment due to threats of litigation.

This can rob communities of vital economic development opportunities.

The Brownfields statute provides liability defenses for landowners and potential purchasers... and authorizes grants to encourage environmental assessment cleanups.

This program can rejuvenate existing property and infrastructure... take development pressures off of undeveloped land... and it improves the environment.

All of this increases local tax bases and creates jobs for Americans across the country.

The Brownfields program has been successful in removing barriers to investment and economic development, while also addressing environmental contamination.

Since 2002, the EPA Brownfields program has cleaned up 2,260 properties...

... revitalized 10,400 properties for reuse...

... created more than 270,500 jobs...

...and resulted in \$39.7 billion in investment.

This has translated into numerous success stories...

There is Minute Maid Park in Houston, Texas – home of the Houston Astros. Since 2000, the ballpark holds more than 41,000 fans for its 81 home games each season.

Minute Maid Park has hosted games in three of the last seven World Series, including in 2021, when the three World Series games generated \$25 million for Houston.

The park also frequently hosts concerts and other major events to bring the Houston community together.

Then there is the Georgia Sea Turtle Center on Jekyll Island, Georgia.

This 5,500 square foot facility includes an exhibit area, visitor space, and a veterinary clinic.

Jekyll Island – where the turtle center is located – receives more than three million visitors per year.

And looking closer to my home, there is the University District in Spokane, Washington.

The University District has five major universities and two medical school programs.

The Health, Education, and Research Complex at the University District boasts some 90,000 enrolled students at eight regional universities.

The University District also inspires economic development, such as Life Sciences Spokane, which supports the billion-dollar Intermountain Northwest health sciences sector.

The Brownfields program has played a role in all these stories, improving the lives of Americans and bringing prosperity around the country.

By reauthorizing the Brownfields program, we can build on these successes.

Brownfields extension has historically been a bipartisan goal for this committee.

And as an authorizing committee, one of our most important responsibilities are periodic reauthorizations, like this...

...which help ensure taxpayer dollars are being spent responsibly and that programs like Brownfields are working and helping our communities.

Today's hearing is an opportunity to review and, if possible, enhance the Brownfields program.

It's a continuation of the regular order process that began last Congress.

This discussion draft is the next step, and as always, we encourage engagement from all members and stakeholders.

As we work this through the Committee process, and especially when considering the funding figures for the program...

...it's important that we don't neglect to remember just how much in taxpayer dollars was spent last Congress.

It is vital that we appropriate responsibly and allow for proper oversight to ensure accountability of these resources.

There are risks to dramatically increasing funding for this program, including decreasing competition as well as quality among grant applicants.

We also need to make sure non-suburban communities, or those with less than 100,000 people, are benefitting from the program.

We should continue the tradition of bipartisan action on this topic.

The Brownfields program continues to be an effective cleanup program with a purpose--encouraging economic growth and improving communities in places that have lacked investment.

Let's stay focused on this goal, which has brought prosperity, revitalization, and opportunity to communities across the country.

I welcome our expert witnesses and their perspectives and look forward to their testimony.

I yield back.