

March 26, 2008 - Slaughter Announces Introduction of Waterfront Brownfields Act

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Rep. Slaughter Announces
Introduction of

the

Waterfront Brownfields Revitalization Act

NIAGARA FALLS, NY – Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28),
Chairwoman of the House Committee on Rules, today announced the introduction
of H.R. 5469, the Waterfront Brownfields Revitalization Act at Niagara Falls City Hall. She was joined by
Mayor Paul Dyster, City of Niagara Falls, Tom DeSantis, Niagara Falls City
Planner, Brian Smith, Center for Environmental Information, and Abby Snyder,
New York State DEC.

This legislation provides support to communities seeking to overcome the unique challenges of revitalizing waterfront brownfield properties. The bill was introduced by Rep. Slaughter in the House of Representatives on February 14, 2008 and has twenty cosponsors.

“My bill helps local communities reconnect with their waterfronts after decades of environmental contamination stemming from our nation’s industrial heritage,” said Rep. Slaughter. “Abandoned factories, dilapidated mills, and underutilized ports scatter the shores of metropolitan areas in Western New York and across the country. The barriers created by these brownfields threaten to derail community efforts to revitalize their downtowns and attract tourists.”

“My legislation partners the federal government with cities and towns across the country in order to revitalize the waterfronts that should be vibrant engines of economic activity and job creation,” Slaughter continued. “By opening up these shorelines, we can breathe new life into struggling regional economies.”

The legislation is supported by the National Brownfields Coalition, a group of more than 20 national organizations that represent local governments, environmental professionals, community and economic developers, and land trusts, as well as, the American Waterfront Revitalization Coalition, which represents twenty-one cities nationwide, including the City of Rochester.

BACKGROUND ON LEGISLATION

Waterfront brownfields present challenges beyond typical environmental assessment and cleanup projects. Hydrology, water quality, wetlands, endangered species, habitat, dredged materials, flooding, environmental infrastructure, navigation, and other considerations must be carefully addressed so as not to exacerbate existing site contamination. Typically, waterfront brownfields require the involvement of multiple governmental agencies. As such, waterfront brownfields require special attention and resources to overcome their larger hurdles.

Under the Waterfront Brownfields Revitalization Act, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) would be authorized to establish a waterfront brownfields pilot demonstration program to provide local communities with up to \$500,000 per grantee to assist and showcase communities that are overcoming the unique challenges of waterfront brownfields.

This grant program is intended to foster innovative approaches to waterfront brownfields such as:

- the integration of land use and water quality;
- the use of low impact development, stormwater protection, and green infrastructure;
- the cleanup and management of contaminated sediments;
- the integration of flood protection with waterfront parks, recreation, and appropriate development;
- the coordination of multiple inter-jurisdictional agencies involved in waterfront brownfields; and
- other unique waterfront challenges.

Grants may be used for a variety of waterfront brownfields-related purposes including reuse planning, design and engineering, technical assistance and capacity building, and waterfront brownfields assessment and cleanup.

The Waterfront Brownfields

Revitalization Act also establishes an interagency taskforce on waterfront brownfields restoration. The taskforce would be led by the EPA's Office of Brownfields Cleanup and Redevelopment and would include the participation of other EPA offices, as well as, agencies involved in waterfront revitalization such as the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Department of Transportation, the Economic Development Administration, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other appropriate federal agencies. In addition, the taskforce would include representatives from appropriate state and local governments, community-based organizations, and stakeholder organizations involved in waterfront revitalization.

The interagency waterfront brownfields taskforce would identify current and potential resources for waterfront brownfields revitalization, identify barriers and potential solutions to waterfront brownfields revitalization, and identify methods for federal interagency collaboration on such projects. The taskforce would be required to provide a report to Congress on these issues no later than 3 years after the date of enactment of this legislation.

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