

Falmouth firm to help assess brownfields

MACHIAS - The Washington County Council of Governments has selected GEI Consultants of Falmouth as the engineering firm to assist with environmental assessments of brownfield sites in Washington County.

In May 2009, WCCOG obtained a \$400,000 Brownfields Assessment Grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to identify properties where an environmental assessment may lead to successful redevelopment.

Brownfield sites are those where redevelopment is impeded by contamination, either real or perceived.

"We have estimated there are more than 120 potential brownfields sites in Washington County," Judy East, executive director of WCCOG, said in a press release. "These include sites such as former shipyards, dry cleaning establishments, auto repair shops and gas stations. Many of them are located in or near downtowns. Redevelopment or resale can be impeded by real or perceived contamination. These funds cover the cost of Phase 1 assessments that can cost about \$3000 to complete and the more detailed Phase II assessments that can cost \$25,000-\$45,000 depending on the complexity of the site."

In May, 2009 WCCOG was awarded a \$400,000 Brownfields Assessment Grant from the United States Environmental Protection Agency. Under the USEPA Grant, WCCOG will work with willing and interested property owners where an environmental assessment may lead to successful redevelopment.

"We have targeted four communities - Calais, Cherryfield, Cutler and Machias - that have Brownfields sites and particular re-development potential. However, any site in the county would be considered in the community-based site identification process," says East.

WCCOG selected GEI Consultants an engineering firm with 35 year experience working in Maine and New England. GEI will work with the WCCOG's Brownfields committee to identify sites and conduct environmental assessments for the duration of a 3 year contract that WCCOG has with the USEPA.

According to Todd Coffin, senior project manager at GEI, "Working on Brownfields projects around Maine, we've seen the real potential for this type of redevelopment to transform local communities. We're excited to be a part of the opportunity that this grant represents for Washington County. And we're looking forward to getting started."

The Washington County Council of Governments (WCCOG) is a non-profit municipal membership organization that delivers a wide range of customized planning, advisory and resource development services to help communities build the future of Washington County. For more information about the Brownfields program, visit the WCCOG website at www.wccog.net or contact Judy East (454-0465) or Jeremy Gabrielson (255-0983).