Northwest Indiana RDA Regional Development Authority

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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EPA Approves Brownfield Cleanup Fund

Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority to manage $1 million revolving loan fund to clean up environmental contamination in Gary, Hammond and East Chicago.

Hammond, IN (May 29, 2013) – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has awarded the RDA $800,000 toward the establishment of a $1 million revolving loan fund for brownfield remediation in the cities of Gary, Hammond and East Chicago.

The RDA was one of 240 grant recipients who will receive $62.5 million from the EPA's Brownfields Assessment, Revolving Loan Fund and Cleanup (ARC) grants. The RDA grant was one of just five awarded in Indiana, and the largest outside of Indianapolis.

"This EPA grant will help clean up contaminated properties in Northwest Indiana," Region 5 Administrator Susan Hedman said. "The grant will spur redevelopment, help build new housing and create jobs in Gary, Hammond and East Chicago."

"Today's news reaffirms that local leaders are investing in our future and working together in the best interest of Northwest Indiana's long-term economic growth and development," said Congressman Pete Visclosky. "I am confident that with revitalized properties, improved housing, and new job opportunities, we will encourage even more young people to build a life in our region, which in turn will help our economy grow and thrive. I commend the Regional Development Authority, the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission, and the cities of Gary, Hammond, and East Chicago for their efforts to secure the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's support."

"The RDA will work closely with its coalition partners – the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) and the cities of Gary, Hammond and East Chicago – to clean up contaminated sites," said Sherri Ziller, COO of the RDA. Ziller, who led the successful grant application at the RDA, will serve as Project Director overseeing the revolving loan fund. Kathy Luther, Director of Environmental Programs at NIRPC, will serve as Assistant Project Director. They will be supported by a five-member loan committee that will review proposed projects and make recommendations regarding action. The RDA will also retain an environmental consultant to assist in managing and tracking the progress of the projects.

"NIRPC is pleased to be a partner in this brownfield coalition," said Luther. "Revitalization of our core urban communities is one of the primary goals arrived at the Northwest Indiana 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan. This brownfield revolving loan fund will be an exciting new tool to move us toward this goal." Initial efforts are slated to target four priority sites:

- **Buffington Harbor.** This former U.S. Steel site includes 200 acres along the Lake Michigan shoreline contaminated with heavy metals, asbestos, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). These contaminants can cause kidney and liver damage, respiratory problems and cancer, among other ailments.
- **The Gary Downtown City Center.** This includes 15 city blocks in central Gary that once housed paint shops, auto service centers, dry cleaners and printing shops. The area has concentrations of lead, heavy metals, hexavalent, chromium, solvents, PAHs and asbestos that can cause nerve and liver damage, respiratory issues, anemia and bone marrow problems and mesothelioma.
- **Union Tank Car.** This 50-acre site in East Chicago was once used to manufacturer railroad tank cars and is contaminated with heavy metals, lead, solvents, hexavalent, chromium and PAHs.
- **The 6200 Block of Columbia.** This consists of 15 acres of vacant commercial space in southeast Hammond that is contaminated with chlorinated-VOCs that can cause headaches, respiratory problems, nerve and liver damage, and affect fetal development.

The grant coalition and community-based groups, including the Lakeshore and Gary Chambers, the Downtown Hammond Council, Foundations of East Chicago, Pulaski Park Neighborhood Association, East Chicago Community Health Center and the Shirley Heinz Land Trust will

conduct outreach efforts to inform the public about the projects, their goals and benefits, and employment opportunities. In 2002 and 2009, Gary was awarded EPA funds to establish a Brownfields and Green Jobs Training Program, graduates of which will be eligible to work on these cleanup projects.

The next step for the coalition partners is to draft a joint memorandum of understanding (MOU) on how grant funds will be distributed and managed, and to solicit public comment on the initial projects via print, broadcast and online media, and face-to-face events.

This latest grant represents the RDA's third partnership with EPA. Previously, EPA has provided $1 million for dredging of the Marquette Park lagoons and $350,000 for storm water mitigation projects in the Miller Beach neighborhood surrounding Marquette Park. Both of those EPA grants resulted from the RDA's $28 million Marquette Park restoration project.

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About the Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority

Established in 2005 through a bipartisan effort including Governor Mitchell E. Daniels, Congressman Peter J. Visclosky, key state legislators, and local elected officials, the RDA is quasi-governmental development entity entrusted to make public investment decisions within a regional framework for supporting catalytic infrastructure projects and inducing private sector investment. Its mission is to be a catalyst for transforming the economy and quality of life for Northwest Indiana. For more information, visit www.rdatransformation.com or www.in.gov/rda