

**PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN**

**FOR**

Rogue Valley Brownfield Coalition Project  
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**Submitted by**

Rogue Valley Council of Governments  
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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Project Background

The Rogue River Valley is the economic engine of Southwestern Oregon, and home to the region's two largest metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs), Medford and Grants Pass. These two MSAs are the Target Area for the project. Medford is the 8<sup>th</sup> largest city in Oregon (largest in Jackson County), while Grants Pass is the 16<sup>th</sup> largest, and the most populous in Josephine County. Included within the Medford MSA are the cities of Central Point and White City.

In 1884, the Oregon and California Railroad was constructed through the Rogue Valley, and Medford and Grants Pass were founded as railroad towns. With railroad access to distant markets, the orchard industry flourished in the early 1900s. US Highway 99 (now State Highway 99 [OR-99]) was constructed in 1915 connecting Medford, Central Point and Grants Pass. In 1963, Interstate Highway 5 (I-5) was completed, improving vehicular access to markets within and outside the Rogue Valley, but also generating brownfield challenges by diverting growth from the OR-99 corridor to areas easily accessed via I-5. During World War II, Medford became a military town with the construction of Camp White, an Army training post and prisoner-of-war camp. At its peak, Camp White housed 40,000 soldiers. Following the war it was repurposed into the unincorporated Jackson County community of White City, the area's industrial hub. The demand for lumber after the war sparked a wood products manufacturing boom. At the industry's peak in 1951, 90,000 workers were employed in the timber industry in Oregon. By 2008, the number employed had decreased to 25,000 as a result of lower demand, automation, and endangered species act regulations. Amongst Target Area communities, more than 15 lumber mills have closed, and the vast majority of these sites remain vacant today creating a severe brownfield challenge.

To address brownfield impacts in the Target Area, the Rogue Valley Council of Governments (RVCOG) formed a Coalition with Medford, Grants Pass, Central Point, and Jackson County (representing White City). Led by the RVCOG, Coalition partners are working to strengthen the local economy by attracting new, diverse industries, with emphasis on social equity by focusing project activities in demographically challenged areas. Brownfields, including shuttered mills, abandoned gas stations and former auto sales and service facilities are a significant impediment to economic development, and are a source of disproportionate welfare, environmental, and public health impacts. Coalition community-wide assessment funding will allow us to develop a comprehensive program to address brownfields throughout the Target Area, prioritizing our focus areas. Environmental assessment projects will benefit the region, paving the way for future cleanup and redevelopment to recover lost property tax revenue, catalyze private investment, improve livability, expand employment opportunities, and address social inequities in the Rogue Valley.

## 1.2 Organizational Structure and Responsibilities

RVCOG will lead Coalition public involvement, and Greg Stabach of RVCOG is designated as the program spokesperson. The RVCOG was formed in 1968 to operate within Jackson and Josephine Counties in accordance with its Charter and Bylaws. RVCOG currently has twenty-two members: 15 local governments and seven other jurisdictions (such as special districts and higher education institutions). Each member government appoints an official as its representative on RVCOG's Board of Directors. The majority of RVCOG's funding comes through grants and contracts with federal, state, and local government, with additional monies coming from donations and membership dues. It has no legislative, taxing, or enforcement authority.

Although the COG's programs have evolved over the years as a response to new needs of members and changing funding sources, it has always maintained its fundamental role as a regional resource for technical expertise and project management, as well as a collective voice for the region when working with the state or federal government.

As a result of RVCOG's regional presence, it was designated as the Rogue Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (RVMPO) by the Governor in 1982. In the interests of efficiency, the direct MPO policy functions were delegated by the COG to a committee of elected and appointed officials from Ashland, Talent, Jacksonville, Central Point, Medford, Phoenix, Eagle Point, Jackson County, Oregon Department of Transportation, and the Rogue Valley Transportation District. The COG, however, continues to fully staff the MPO, which is responsible for: 1) developing and maintaining a Regional Transportation Plan and a Transportation Improvement Program; 2) performing regional air quality conformity analyses for carbon monoxide and particulate matter; 3) coordinating transportation decisions among local jurisdictions, state agencies, and area transit operators, 4) developing an annual work program; and 5) housing and staffing the regional travel demand model for the purposes of assessing, planning, and coordinating regional travel demand impacts.

Greg Stabach, Natural Resources Program Manager for RVCOG is the project manager and will lead public involvement activities. Greg will draw from available RVCOG and Coalition partner personnel resources in implementing public involvement activities. Coalition partner leads will represent the interests of their jurisdictions, will serve on the project Brownfield Advisory Committee, and assist with community outreach and public involvement throughout the grant term. Coalition partner leads are listed below. Contact information for these individuals is provided in the Cooperative Agreement Work Plan prepared for the project.

- City of Medford - Matt Brinkley, AICP, CFM
- City of Grants Pass - Scott Lindberg
- City of Central Point - Tom Humphrey, AICP
- Jackson County – Ted Zuk, CBO

## **2. GOALS/OBJECTIVES OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

Redeveloping brownfields is a long-term, multi-step process. Keeping the public informed and participating can help achieve project goals. For example, eliciting the public's help in identifying local brownfields can diminish the chances that potential sites escape the attention of a task force, environmental contractor, or project team.

Priorities for public involvement include:

- Education about brownfields
- Ensuring project objectives and activities are explained to the local communities closest to sites of interest
- Soliciting community input about possible site locations and site selection criteria
- Consulting stakeholders, technical advisers, and community leaders for assistance in achieving project and public information objectives

Property owners, as members of the general public, will also be influenced by processes of community engagement; specific strategies for reaching and ensuring their participation must be considered alongside all other public involvement activities. Since assessment cannot occur without a property owner's written consent, it is vitally important that landowners recognize the benefits of their participation in the project.

### **3. PLANNED PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES**

Public involvement for the project was initiated in 2015 when a public meeting was held on November 17, 2015 to inform and solicit support for a brownfield program. A second similar meeting was held at the Medford Public Library on November 3, 2016. Given the intent of these meetings, the meeting format included an informational presentation followed by an interactive question and answer period. Meeting attendees broadly and strongly indicated their support for the program and many attendees provided letters of support for the program's grant application. We expect that many of the attendees of these meetings will continue to be actively involved in the project, including some as members of the brownfield advisory committee.

The types of public involvement activities planned for the project are summarized in the subsections that follow.

#### **3.1 Creation of Information Repository**

Hard copy documentation related to the project will be kept accessible to the public. Documentation appropriate for direct public release will be uploaded to the Brownfields webpage created by RVCOG. Upon request, hard copies of documentation will also be made available at a location to be determined.

#### **3.2 Brownfield Advisory Committee**

Reflecting best practices of brownfields assessment projects, the Brownfields Coalition Project Team will periodically meet with a select brownfield advisory committee (BAC). The Project Team will look to the BAC for advice and recommendations on achieving the participation of property owners, informing the public, and ideas regarding site selection criteria.

BAC members must reside within the Coalition's jurisdictional area, will not be paid, should understand the time commitment involved, and should not have a conflict of interest with the project's goals. BAC membership will be composed of: 1) organizations that have demonstrated support for the program, such as by providing a letter of support for the program's successful grant application; 2) organizations capable of bringing the underserved members of our Coalition communities to the table; and 3) organizations and individuals capable of assisting in spreading the word regarding the existence of the program.

The BAC that will meet over the duration of the project. It is anticipated that 3 meetings will occur in the first 18 months of the project, and that 2 meetings will occur during the second 18 months of the project. Additional meetings will be held as necessary to solicit input on prioritization of sites and allocation of funding to specific sites or project activities.

#### **3.3 Brownfield Fact Sheets**

The Coalition will prepare fact sheets to be distributed to various community stakeholders, and will:

- Be published in English and if a need is identified, in other languages utilized by community members
- Use non-technical or jargon language
- Include contact info for the RVCOG Project Manager

Fact sheet content will:

- 1) Define the term “brownfield”
- 2) Describe project elements and objectives
- 3) Explain general brownfield issues (question/answer format)
- 4) Inform property owners and other stakeholder regarding the services offered by the program
- 5) Describe the process for site selection

### **3.4 Press Releases**

The Coalition will circulate press releases to local newspapers and magazines (Mail-Tribune, Dailey Courier, Caminos [a southern Oregon spanish language magazine], etc.) and television stations to encourage coverage of project details. Press releases shall occur in conjunction with public meetings and/or specific project milestones.

### **3.5 Direct Mailer**

The Coalition may mail information (a letter or flyer) to a limited number of local addresses in targeted areas informed by the brownfield inventory. Mailers could also be delivered with Neighborhood Association Newsletters in neighborhoods located near potential brownfields if timing is appropriate.

### **3.6 Brownfield Coalition Webpage**

A webpage containing information about the project will be designed and updated regularly with project updates and links to greater information about brownfields. The webpage will be housed on RVCOG’s website (rvcog.org).

The webpage will include the following elements:

- Information about the project, including the USEPA logo and Coalition partner logos
- General information about brownfields
- Timeline of project activities
- Meetings information, status updates, and news
- Project fact sheets
- A link to send comments, questions, or inquiries to the RVCOG Project Manager
- Access to a downloadable Nomination Form that can be used to apply for participation in the program

### **3.7 Public Meetings**

Public meetings are an opportunity to educate the community regarding program activities and goals, to gather focused input on key factors that the community believes should be utilized in site selection, and to get word out about program benefits as a means to solicit program participation. We anticipate holding the following public meetings.

**Meeting 1:** Organized in collaboration with neighborhood, public health, and environmental advocates, this meeting will explain the goals of the project in relation to public health, the community, and the environment. Input on site selection criteria will be sought from attendees.

**Meeting 2:** This meeting will reiterate some of the same themes as Meeting 1, but will focus more on project participation. As such, it will focus on project successes, project benefits, and the steps necessary to participate in the program. While the general public will be invited to this meeting, there will be a more intentional focus on getting property owners and commercial realtors to this meeting.

**Meeting 3:** The purpose of this meeting is to inform the community regarding project successes. It will be held early in the fourth quarter of 2020.

#### 4. SCHEDULE

The public outreach activities described in Section 3 will be on-going throughout the 3-year duration of the project. An anticipated schedule for BAC and public meetings is summarized in the table below. The timing of meetings is provided based upon the EPA fiscal year: October 1 through September 30 (i.e., First Quarter = Oct. 1 to Dec 31; Second Quarter = Jan 1 to Mar 30; Third Quarter = Apr 1 to Jun 30; Fourth Quarter = Jul 1 to Sep 30).

<b>MEETING</b>	<b>TIMING</b>
BAC Meeting 1	Second Quarter – 2018
Public Meeting 1	Third Quarter – 2018
BAC Meeting 2	Fourth Quarter – 2018
Public Meeting 2	First Quarter – 2019
BAC Meeting 3	Second Quarter – 2019
BAC Meeting 4	Fourth Quarter – 2019
BAC Meeting 5	Third Quarter 2020
Public Meeting 3	Third Quarter 2020