



April 8, 2009

Dear Member of Congress:

As the Congress works this session to develop clean energy legislation, we are writing to urge your consideration of an opportunity to combine the generation of clean renewable energy on brownfield sites, many of which are currently sitting idle.

For years, The U.S. Conference of Mayors has made the redevelopment of brownfields a top priority. The reason is simple-brownfields are abandoned or underutilized properties that have become virtual "dead zones" because of fears over real or perceived environmental contamination. Many brownfields sites were once prosperous industrial and commercial businesses, which are now closed. Brownfields present a major challenge for both small and large cities - primarily due to the lack of funding necessary to redevelop and/or recycle these lands. To locally elected officials, these sites represent missed opportunities to alleviate blight and create additional jobs.

At the same time that we leave these properties unused, developers are seeking to develop undisturbed "greenfield" sites on private and public lands to site renewable energy projects. The Wilderness Society is actively working to site renewable energy in the most appropriate places on the public lands. Part of this work means taking full advantage of brownfield sites. At a time when we are losing open space at the rate of 6,000 acres a day, according to the Forest Service, it is essential to take maximum advantage of these abandoned or underutilized properties to minimize the loss of farmland and greenspaces while repowering the nation.

A recent survey by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Department of Energy's National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) found that significant opportunities exist to generate renewable energy on already-industrialized brownfield sites close to where people use it, negating the need for costly transmission infrastructure. Their mapping analysis has yielded an inventory of over four thousand EPA-tracked brownfield sites that could be good candidates for solar, wind, or biomass energy production facilities. These sites have existing transmission capacity and infrastructure in-place.

We urge you to provide an appropriate incentive under the Renewable Electricity Standard (RES) legislation to prioritize generation of renewable electricity from brownfield sites. This approach offers a rare win-win situation for both advocates of economic redevelopment, renewable energy, and smart growth. By prioritizing these sites, the nation can help meet the growing national demand for renewable energy while lessening pressure on greenspace and providing economically viable and socially beneficial futures for sites that are currently underused or vacant.

Opportunities to repower the nation are lost when properties remain idle and abandoned. We strongly urge you to capitalize on this unique opportunity to repower America by revitalizing underutilized lands. We stand prepared to assist you. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call our staff – Judy Sheahan with the Conference of Mayors at 202-861-6775 or David Moulton with the Wilderness Society at 202-429-2681. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Tom Cochran
CEO and Executive Director
The U.S. Conference of Mayors



Bill Meadows
President
The Wilderness Society