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Grant to help tackle brownfields in Monaca

Thursday, March 03, 2011

By Shannon M. Nass

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has designated Monaca a Brownfields Area-Wide Planning Pilot Program and has awarded \$150,000 in grant funding to the borough.

Monaca is one of 23 communities across the nation to be selected.

"It's pretty humbling that we were chosen," said Mario Leone, Monaca manager. "We were selected among some pretty large municipal entities."

The funding is part of an EPA pilot grant that reflects their stance in determining potential uses for brownfields sites prior to any reclamation. Brownfields are abandoned or under used industrial and commercial facilities available for re-use.

Mr. Leone said the money will be used for planning approaches to brownfields assessment, cleanup, and subsequent re-use.

The proposal was submitted by Monaca in partnership with Midland, Aliquippa, Coraopolis and the Ohio River Trail Council in an effort to target four brownfield areas along the proposed 41-mile Ohio River Trail Corridor.

"What stimulated this whole grant approach is the Ohio River Trail," Mr. Leone said. "Our goal is to get the trail as close to the riverbanks as possible."

The only designated bike path in Monaca is along Route A. "It's pretty much Route 51 through Monaca all the way through Coraopolis," said Mr. Leone. "It's four lanes and most of it is pretty treacherous riding."

In addition to trail access, Mr. Leone said possible uses for the land include residential housing, hotels and a sports and recreation complex.

The targeted date of completion for the project is December 2012 with expectations that it will be completed sooner.

Mr. Leone said it's a realistic goal and that the project has received community support.

He said interest is growing as people realize how other areas have benefitted from the trails.

"It's being welcomed in Beaver County," Mr. Leone said.

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First published on March 3, 2011 at 5:30 am