

# Firm wins Sugar Loaf assessment job contract

By Eric Carlson  
*Of The Enterprise staff*

A Saginaw-based firm has been selected to conduct an environmental assessment of Sugar Loaf Resort as a first step toward creating a brownfield redevelopment plan for the resort property following action this week by the Leelanau County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (LCBRA).

AKT Peerless environmental and energy services of Saginaw beat out two other firms vying to work with the LCBRA on the project, including one suggested by the resort's owner, Kate Wickstrom.

Andrew Smits of the Traverse City-based Inland Seas Engineering firm appeared before the authority board at its regular monthly meeting Tuesday morning with his own proposal to conduct similar work for the county. The board heard as well from Jeff Hawkins of Kalamazoo-based Envirologic Technologies who also sought the contract. Both AKT Peerless and Envirologic have done consulting work for the LCBRA on other projects.

As part of his proposal, Smits noted that he had met on July 7 with Wickstrom, her attorney, her father and Leelanau County commissioner David W. "Chauncey" Shiflett who represents District No. 5 and chairs the LCBRA. Shiflett was not present at the LCBRA's July 28 meeting, however.

On June 24 and 25 in Maple City, the county and Cleveland and Centerville townships sponsored a series of "visioning sessions" for Sugar Loaf Resort that were attended by Wickstrom as well as more than 250 local residents interested in offering ideas for how to redevelop the resort. The sessions were underwritten by grant funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and were facilitated by experts from Kansas State University and Michigan State University under the EPA's a "technical assistance to brownfield communities" TAB-C program.

Each of the firms vying to conduct a brownfield assessment of Sugar Loaf is seeking payment with EPA grant funding available through the LCBRA. Cost estimates for initial work on environmental assessments from each of the contractors were very similar in most areas.

The proposal selected by the LCBRA, from AKT Peerless, calls for a series of environmental assessments, surveys and plans that could cost between \$40,400 and \$44,900 – all of which would come from an EPA grant the county has received.

A "phase one" environmental assessment would cost \$2,300; a following "subsurface investigation" would cost \$15,000 to \$18,000; a "due care plan" \$2,400; a "property condition assessment" \$2,700; a "hazardous materials

survey" \$10,000 to \$11,500; and a "brownfield redevelopment plan" \$8,000, according to AKT's initial estimate.

The firm's principal, Brian Eggers, said he has a larger staff more experienced in brownfield redevelopment than the other firms. He said his firm has considerable expertise in maximizing the range of "financial incentives" that will attract potential redevelopers to a brownfield. He said his company's services would include an examination of whether any underground storage tanks are a problem, whether mold has infested buildings, and a "pre-demolition survey" which will quantify the costs and benefits of either tearing down or salvaging certain facilities at the defunct ski resort.

"The critical part will be determining which of the facilities need to be demolished or reused," Eggers told the LCBRA board. "The work we do will be focused on efforts that will attract the next developer."

Smits told the board that, during his conversations with Wickstrom, it was clear that she no longer intended to redevelop the resort herself and is focused on selling it. Wickstrom was eager to take measures that would attract a buyer and make redevelopment of the resort economically viable, "whether it's a private entity, a public entity, or a public-private partnership," Smits said.

The current asking price is \$5.7 million.

LCBRA board member Eric Winkelman of Glen Arbor Township expressed concern that spending taxpayer money, even federal grant dollars, on the environmental assessments and a brownfield plan might only allow the resort's current owner to "jack up the price."

Other members of the board pointed out, however, that it was more likely that uncovering any environmental concerns and the true condition of the resort would have the effect of lowering the sales price. Involvement of the LCBRA would also position a potential redeveloper to take advantage of grant funding, low interest loans and special tax incentives as part of the brownfield redevelopment process.

Eggers told the board that employees of his firm could be ready to begin conducting the initial environmental assessments within the next 30 days.

## Scripps to meet with constituents Monday

State Rep Dan Scripps (D-Leland) will be at the Silvertree Deli and Cafe in Suttons Bay Monday to meet with constituents.

He will be at the Silvertree from 9 to 10 a.m. The cafe is located at 199 N. St. Joseph St.