

No underground tanks leaking at Sugar Loaf, assessment finds

By Eric Carlson
Of The Enterprise staff

A "Phase II" environmental assessment of Sugar Loaf Resort completed last month found no more in the way of contamination at the long-shuttered ski resort than a "Phase I" assessment conducted in October.

At their regular monthly meeting last week, members of the Leelanau County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (LCBRA) heard from representatives of AKT Peerless Environmental Services which is conducting the assessments using part of the \$100,000 in grant funding the county acquired through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

County Planning and Community Development department head Trudy Galla, who also serves as director of the LCBRA, said that during the "Phase II" assessment, engineers were able to locate one of the underground storage tanks on the resort property which not even its current owner, Kate

Wickstrom, was aware of.

"There are a number of underground storage tanks on the property," Galla explained, "and the assessment showed that none of them are leaking."

Little environmental contamination and no public health or safety concerns have been uncovered at Sugar Loaf. However, because the facility is considered "obsolete" and "blighted," it qualifies as a "brownfield" under state and federal law.

The next task AKT Peerless will accomplish under its \$25,000 contract with the LCBRA is the creation of a General Brownfield Plan for Sugar Loaf Resort. The plan will be based on the citizen "visioning sessions" for Sugar Loaf conducted earlier this year in Maple City through an EPA grant. The sessions were sponsored by the LCBRA as well as Cleveland and Centerville townships, where the resort property is located, and resulted in a report outlining a range of conceptual plans for the resort.

AKT's preliminary brownfield plan for Sugar Loaf will include estimates of how much money will be needed to clean up and redevelop the property. The plan will also provide future, potential developers of Sugar Loaf Resort with an estimate of how much money in federal and state grant funding and loans may be available to pay for cleanup and redevelopment if the developers cooperate with the LCBRA.

The plan also will include an estimate of the tax increment financing and other funding that may be used by a developer who redevelops the property in keeping with the LCBRA's plans and the wishes of the community. Galla said she expects AKT Peerless to present the initial brownfield plan at the LCBRA's next regular monthly meeting on Dec. 22.

"The townships, as well as the Brownfield Authority need to review and approve this plan before it is put out there for developers," Galla explained. "The idea is for the brownfield plan to attract developers, and provide them a basis for developing their own, specific plans for the resort."

In other business at their Nov. 24 meeting, members of the LCBRA also heard updates on:

- Another project by AKT Peerless to update a comprehensive Hazardous Materials inventory list for the county.

- Brownfield projects being managed for the LCBRA by another contractor, Envirologic Technologies, including the Varley-Kelly project in Leland and the West Bay Partners project in Elmwood Township.

- A trip by Galla to a national Brownfields 2009 Conference in New Orleans earlier this month. Galla reported that regional EPA officials who presented briefings at the conference are using Leelanau County as an example of how rural municipalities can take effective advantage of state and federal brownfield laws, programs and funding.

Land bank group seeks '2%' funding

The Leelanau County Land Bank Authority (LBA) will ask the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chipewewa Indians for some \$5,000 in two percent casino revenue funding to help pay for training and education of authority heard members.

The LBA last month established its goals and objectives – and recently put its first two parcels into the county's "land bank" as a result of tax forfeitures. One of the properties is a four-acre parcel located between two portions of the troubled BayView residential development in Suttons Bay, and another is a share of an easement to a waterfront parcel on North Lake Leelanau.

"The Land Bank Authority is financially independent from the Leelanau County government and tries to be 'budget neutral,'" said authority member Trudy Galla, who also serves as head of the county's Planning and Community Development Department.

Founded just over a year ago, the authority this year took a \$10,000 loan from the county government, which it expects to pay back through the sales of properties that end up in the county land bank, either through tax forfeiture, donation, or other means.

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