

## SFRPC'S BROWNFIELDS CLEANUP REVOLVING LOAN FUND PROJECT UPDATE

Middle Torch Key – Monroe County, FL

### BACKGROUND

The Target area lies within the National Key Deer Refuge. The priority site is the Old Baltuff Dump, a former illegal landfill located on Middle Torch Key. Middle Torch Key, and its neighboring island Big Torch Key, are sparsely populated, and are the only two islands in the Keys that are designated as a wildlife corridor and managed as wildlife habitat. The site borders a sensitive water estuary and is populated with protected species of plants and trees which grow in the limestone soil typical of the Florida Keys. The Old Baltuff Dump is 14.25 acres in size and is bounded to the north and east by the Gulf of Mexico and to the south and west by sparsely populated residential areas. The site is low-lying, waterfront property with elevations less than 5 feet above mean sea level and is considered an estuarine/marine wetland with tidal impacted soils and mangrove swamp vegetation (buttonwood and black mangroves). The site is adjacent to an "Outstanding Florida Waters" (OFW) area as designated by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP). OFW are water bodies worthy of special protection because of natural attributes. The site is listed as a federal flood zone AE-9 (structures must be 9 feet or more above grade). The surrounding neighborhood area is low density residential. All the properties immediately bordering the site are undeveloped lands.



The Old Baltuff Dump was formerly used as both a legal and illegal waste transfer and open burn disposal site from the 1960s until the 1990s. Because of the relatively remote location, illegal dumping went largely unnoticed except by the residents whose efforts to stop the operation were ongoing. Since HFH has owned the property, all illegal dumping has ceased. Based on completed site analysis, the contaminants of concern are antimony, arsenic, cadmium, chromium, copper, lead, vanadium, zinc, bis(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate and 2,3,7,8 tetrachlorodibenzodioxin (TCDD).



The Florida Keys in general and the target area specifically are affected by a combination of high land values, land use limitations due to geography and environmental factors, a housing supply limited by controlled growth ordinances, a tourism-based economy with a prevalence of low wage service sector jobs and an increased exposure to extreme tropical storms and hurricanes. For several years, HFH pursued available funding opportunities to advance assessment and cleanup, but support was not available at the time. A turning point came in 2024, when new resources positioned the South Florida Regional Planning Council to step in and help move the Old Baltuff Dump site forward. Intended future use of the property post assessment and cleanup will be for affordable housing and land conservation.

### **\$3.5 MILLION AWARD FROM THE EPA**

In June 2024, the EPA announced the recipients of more than \$300 million in Brownfield Grants through the Biden Administration's Investing in America Agenda to rehabilitate and revitalize communities. In addition to the \$3,200,000 in EPA funds already awarded, the SFRPC was selected to receive an additional \$3,500,000 through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) because of our high-performing Revolving Loan Fund Programs. These funds will replenish the program's significantly depleted funds and allow new projects to move forward.

With this funding in place, the South Florida Regional Planning Council (SFRPC) was able to support Habitat for Humanity of Key West and the Lower Keys (HFH). HFH is located at 471 Overseas Highway, Unit #102, in Big Coppitt Key, Florida 33040.



As of 2026-2027, the following activities are underway to advance the next phase of work:

- The final draft of the Community Involvement Plan is underway, with completion targeted for March.
- Bid documents for the next phase of remedial design sampling are being finalized and are expected to be released by early March.
- HFH's subgrant agreement documentation is in progress.

To learn more about the SFRPC Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund or how to get involved, please contact Senior Loan Officer, Jeffrey Tart at 954.924.3653 or [jtart@sfrpc.com](mailto:jtart@sfrpc.com).