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Southern Ohio Diversification Initiative Announces Major Step Forward for Reindustrialization Project, Job Growth Efforts in the Ohio Valley

Following More than a Decade of Work and Collaboration, Agreement with Newpoint Gas Marks Milestone in Green Energy and Manufacturing Initiative

PIKETON, OH – In a significant step forward for a major reindustrialization project that aims to reinvigorate manufacturing and the economy in the Ohio Valley and Central Appalachia, the Southern Ohio Diversification Initiative (SODI) today announced that Newpoint Gas, LLC has signed a Letter of Intent for option and right of first refusal to purchase land where the project will be located.

The project – the reindustrialization of the former Portsmouth Diffusion Plant (PORTS) facility near Piketon, Ohio – will be the foundation of the Ohio Valley “Green Energy and Manufacturing” Initiative (GEM). GEM is a bipartisan, labor-focused, functioning public-private partnership that is the result of a 12-year effort to establish a transformational economic development strategy coordinated under the leadership of SODI and Ohio University’s Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Service.

“The Ohio Valley Green Energy Manufacturing Initiative represents a unique, generational opportunity to reinvigorate communities that have been left behind as energy production and manufacturing shifted over the last several decades. The agreement with Newpoint Gas is a monumental step toward realizing that reality,” **said Steve Shepherd, Executive Director of SODI**. “By reindustrializing the former PORTS facility, we will be a nation-leading example – right here in Southern Ohio – of transforming a federal liability into a taxpayer asset that increases economic stability in struggling areas.”

The reindustrialization will transform the former PORTS facility into a power generation facility fueled by clean hydrogen, which will facilitate an Integrated Energy System and Manufacturing complex. The complex will create an “all of the above” energy strategy for decarbonizing power generation, manufacturing, and transportation to create high-paying union jobs while combating the climate crisis in the clean energy economy.

“The reindustrialization of the PORTS facility not only presents enormous opportunity for industry, but also has the chance to be the single most impactful driver of economic growth and stability in this region in a generation,” **said Wiley Rhodes, CEO of Newpoint Gas**. “We are grateful for the opportunity to be

involved in a project that has successfully and thoughtfully brought together such a wide array of interests, from SODI and Ohio University to organized labor and private industry.”

Based on their work in the production of clean hydrogen and power generation, Newpoint Gas was introduced to the project in 2020 and is now the GEM private anchor partner. In addition to Newpoint Gas, SODI, and Ohio University, the partnership also includes organized labor leaders in Ohio and other organizations in support of the reindustrialization effort.

“Ohio University is proud to be a leader in this transformational effort and to show what is possible when academia comes together with private industry, organized labor and public interests to improve the communities in our region,” **said Stephanie Howe, Director of Energy Programs at Ohio University’s Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Service.** “The resources provided by the DOE Office of Environmental Management and Ohio University have been vital to this effort for more than a decade. We collaborate with stakeholders and partners to engage in a data driven process to form and launch the Ohio Valley GEM project. GEM will create enduring jobs in the new energy and sustainable manufacturing economy for the region for decades to come.”

“Organized labor has been working closely with industry and community leaders with the goal of creating good-paying union jobs for workers in the region,” **said Tim Burga, President of the Ohio AFL-CIO.** “As this venture moves forward, we will call for government support to ensure this project is transformative in a part of our state that has all too often been left behind.”

In addition to the reindustrialization of the former PORTS facility, GEM’s longer-term efforts are further enhanced by the availability of deactivated coal fired power plants and other industrial facilities in the region, which can serve as ‘satellite spokes’ to the core complex by converting such facilities to generate and supply additional low-carbon fuel options such as biomass for and raw materials for manufacturing. By design, the concept extends job creation in the region, further develops low-carbon technologies and fuels, and sustainable manufacturing, further enhancing the positive social, economic, and environmental impact in the heart of Appalachia.

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The Southern Ohio Diversification Initiative (SODI) is a nonprofit, community improvement corporation and serves as the DOE-designated community reuse organization for the PORTS facility. SODI’s mission is to improve the quality of life for citizens of Jackson, Pike, Ross, and Scioto Counties through economic diversification, development of underutilized land and facilities on the PORTS facility site, and continued support of local industry. SODI is governed by a Board of Directors comprised of appointed local elected officials and members of the community with members representing business and government leaders from the four-county region.