

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

EXXON COMPANY, U.S.A.  
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DONALD D. ESCM  
NEW JERSEY AREA MANAGER

October 15, 1998

Exxon Project XL Proposal for the  
Sharon Steel, Fairmont Coke Works Site

Mr. Tom Voltaggio  
Acting Deputy Regional Administrator  
USEPA Region III  
841 Chestnut Building  
Philadelphia, PA 19107-4431

Dear Tom,

As Exxon is awaiting the US Environmental Protection Agency approval of our revised Project XL proposal, I thought that it would be appropriate to close the loop with you on the items outlined in your letter of May 4, 1998. As you may recall, your comments addressed three specific areas of concern: (1) our apparent failure to sufficiently involve the West Virginia Division of Environmental Protection. (2) our understanding of the elements of Superior Environmental Performance Under Project XL and (3) the apparent shortcomings of our then-existing remedial investigation workplan.

With respect to the issue of WVDEP involvement, I believe that you and I have since agreed that Exxon's actions were driven by a simple misinterpretation of what was expected of us by EPA Region III. Following receipt of your letter we took immediate steps to reach out to and involve the State of West Virginia in the details of this project. We have since met with Commissioner Miano and his staff and are continuing to work closely with the WVDEP as an integral member of the project team. We fully support and appreciate the State of West Virginia's involvement in the project and believe it to be essential to its success.

As you know, we have spent a considerable amount of effort working with EPA and WVDEP to define the appropriate elements of Superior Environmental Performance as they specifically relate to the management of a Superfund site. As this is the first-ever application of Project XL to an environmental cleanup, it has taken a creative effort by all parties to suitably tailor the SEP elements to the task at hand. We believe that in working with your staff and with input from the WVDEP, we have captured the essence of all of the required elements for Project XL in the proposal that has been submitted to the EPA for approval.

In response to your concerns regarding the adequacy of our remedial investigation workplan, we met with your staff and representatives of the WVDEP on May 7, 1998, and jointly concluded that our differences were the result of misunderstandings of the requirements under the pending Project XL approach. Based on the constructive exchange that took place at this meeting and subsequent discussions with both agencies, Exxon has since submitted a revised workplan that was approved by EPA in September. The field investigation based on the approved plan is currently underway at the site.

Mr. T. Voltaggic

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From the onset of this project, I believe that Exxon has shown a solid commitment to proactively and responsibly address its obligations as they relate to a former subsidiary's ownership of the Fairmont Coke Works. As evidence of this commitment, we took steps early in the process which eventually led to the repurchase of the property. We have since undertaken efforts to secure the site and are proceeding with demolition of the abandoned structures. In addition, we took the initiative to involve and seek input from the local community from the very beginning. Along with our EPA and WVDEP project team members, we have met on numerous occasions with community representatives to apprise them of project activities and to solicit their input. We strongly believe that, as with the WVDEP, the ongoing involvement of the local community is essential for the successful and early return of this site to beneficial and productive use.

I trust that the progress made through our joint efforts along with Exxon's demonstrated commitment to expeditiously advance this project have fully addressed the concerns raised in your letter. We look forward to working with EPA, WVDEP and the Fairmont community to achieve a timely and successful outcome for this project

Very truly yours,

DOE/kml