

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



Project XL: Chicago POTW



WHAT IS PROJECT XL?



Project XL, which stands for “eXcellence and Leadership,” is a national initiative that tests innovative ways of achieving better and more cost-effective public health and environmental protection. The information and lessons learned from Project XL are being used to assist the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in redesigning its current regulatory and policy-setting approaches. Project XL encourages testing of cleaner, cheaper, and smarter ways to attain environmental results superior to those achieved under current regulations and policies, in conjunction with greater accountability to stakeholders. It is vital that each project tests new ideas with the potential for wide application and broad environmental benefits. As of August 2000, twenty-eight pilot experiments are being implemented and over thirty additional projects are in various stages of development.

SUMMARY OF THE CHICAGO POTW PROJECT

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (District) is a Publicly Owned Treatment Works (POTW) which treats wastewater from domestic, commercial, and industrial sources in Chicago and numerous surrounding communities. Through Project XL, the District proposes to investigate ways to increase the effectiveness of the National Pretreatment Program to obtain greater environmental benefit. Four interrelated components of this pilot are for the District to:

- C obtain flexibility from the General Pretreatment oversight requirements (i.e., inspection and sampling) for small Categorical Industrial Users (CIUs) with good compliance records, which will allow the District to reallocate resources to other activities with greater potential for environmental benefit;
- C revise the District’s Pretreatment Program Annual Report to include information on environmental performance that is not currently required, and only information on Significant Industrial Users (SIUs) found in significant noncompliance during the report year;
- C create strategic Performance Partnerships with metal finishing facilities to develop, test and implement alternative measurement systems that demonstrate environmental performance; and
- C develop Toxic-Reduction Action Plans to address non-regulated pollutants of concern.

The Chicago POTW project, EPA’s 29th Final Project Agreement was signed on August 30, 2000.

The District will achieve Superior Environmental Performance (SEP) through the alternative environmental monitoring systems and by identifying, ranking and reducing non-regulated pollutants. The alternative monitoring system will

SUPERIOR ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE

provide more frequent and accurate environmental data than traditional monitoring data, which could lead to improved process performance, decreased regulated pollutant loadings and water consumption, and increased worker safety.

An added environmental benefit of this pilot is that the Partnerships may function as an incentive prompting more facilities to join the Strategic Goals Program. Environmental gains that can be achieved include:

- < Reduced amount of hazardous and toxic waste generated and released,
- < Decreased water and energy consumption,
- < Decreased worker exposure to toxic materials,
- < Improved resource utilization,
- < Decreased demand for raw materials,
- < Reduced overall loading to the District system, and
- < Improved quality of effluent and biosolids.

REGULATORY FLEXIBILITY

Regulatory flexibility will be granted to the District to allow self-monitoring and reporting to be done once per year instead of twice for qualifying Categorical Industrial Users (CIUs). The District will be required to inspect and sample these CIUs once every two years instead of annually. The District's Pretreatment Program Annual Report will be modified to include information on environmental performance that is not currently required, and detailed information only on Significant Industrial Users (SIUs) found to be in significant noncompliance. Alternative measurement systems may be authorized to demonstrate compliance with applicable Pretreatment Standards.

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

Several organizations were invited to participate in a stakeholder group with the District, EPA, and Illinois EPA (IEPA) to develop the FPA. Meetings were advertised and open to the public. Meetings to discuss the FPA were held in Chicago on April 6, May 3, and June 14, 2000. Chicago Metal Finishers Institute, Citizens for a Better Environment, and North Business and Industrial Council participated in the FPA development to a substantial degree. Along with the District, EPA, and IEPA, these three groups and other organizations and individuals with an interest in the project are welcome to participate as stakeholders during project implementation.

CONTACTS

APPROACHES TO BE TESTED

- C Can POTWs produce Superior Environmental Performance by reducing administrative requirements and oversight for good performers; and reinvesting resources in alternative, non-regulatory environmental improvement activities?

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More information about Project XL is available on the Internet at

<http://www.epa.gov/ProjectXL>, or via Project XL's Information Line at 202-260-5754.

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