

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



Project XL: US Filter Recovery Systems



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 September 2000, over thirty pilot experiments are being implemented and several additional projects are in various stages of development.

SUMMARY OF THE US FILTER RECOVERY SYSTEMS PROJECT

US Filter Recovery Systems (USFRS), a commercial hazardous waste treatment and recovery facility in the Minneapolis/St. Paul Metropolitan area, is primarily responsible for removing more than 80 percent of the metals in industrial wastewater that is treated by the local publicly-owned treatment works (POTW) and discharged to the Mississippi River. As part of this XL Project, USFRS proposes to install an ion exchange canister resin system at certain approved customers’ facilities. This de ionization process causes the metals in the waste water to adhere to the resin material in the canister, yielding waste water that is free of metal contaminants and that can be reused in the customers’ process lines.

The resin in a USFRS customer’s ion exchange column typically would be considered a listed hazardous waste (FO06) under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) if the customer’s waste streams included wastewater from electroplating or other similar operations. Under current RCRA regulations, taking advantage of recycling and recovery opportunities may trigger other regulations and impose a financial burden for USFRS customers. USFRS proposes that alternative waste management requirements will be less costly and believes that the removal of certain RCRA regulatory requirements will encourage its potential customers to recycle their waste streams rather than disposing of them by discharge to the local POTW. This XL project also exemplifies the “alternative approaches” that the Agency is seeking to address the small business universe – approaches that work outside of the usual regulatory framework to provide flexibility, reduced burden, cost-savings, and, most important, environmental protection. This XL project, EPA’s 36th, was signed on September 21, 2000.

SUPERIOR ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE

The USFRS XL project will provide superior environmental performance by promoting recycling of water and recovery and reuse of metals that would otherwise be disposed of on land. USFRS and its customers will comply with

requirements, enforceable through a site-specific rule, that are as protective of public health and the environment as the RCRA requirements that would otherwise be applicable. USFRS's state-issued XL permit will incorporate required elements of this program. Additionally, USFRS will be required to retain and submit certain reports which RCRA normally would require of its customers, recycle the metals from its treatment of the resins, and report ongoing environmental performance and success in meeting its targets.

FLEXIBILITY

USFRS seeks flexibility from certain RCRA regulations to encourage water reuse and metals reclamation. In lieu of complying with certain RCRA requirements, generators and transporters who are approved to participate will handle, store, and transport the ion exchange resin wastes in accordance with a new site-specific rule. USFRS will handle the ion exchange resin wastes as an FO06 waste and will comply with its existing hazardous waste permit. The proposed rule would impose on USFRS additional reporting and handling requirements in exchange for the regulatory flexibility provided to the generators and transporters. With this flexibility, USFRS's customers, some of which are small businesses, will realize a reduction in costs associated with energy consumption, water use and treatment, record-keeping, manifesting, and transportation of FO06 waste.,

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

Nine public meetings were held to inform the general public and national environmental groups about the project and to invite their comments and participation. Additional public meetings may be held during implementation of the agreement based on public interest or as decided by the direct participants. Stakeholder input and community goals have been and will continue to be considered throughout project implementation.

APPROACHES TO BE TESTED

This innovative pilot will test USFRS's ability to:

- Conserve potable water;
- Achieve better metals recovery through waste segregation and use of ion exchange columns;
- Reduce energy and other costs associated with water treatment; and
- Reduce cost to generators for record-keeping, manifesting, and transporting FO06 waste.

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FOR ELECTRONIC INFORMATION

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.