

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

Local business sponsors part of EPA project

By JAIME LARSON

Press staff writer

OWATONNA -- Fourteen Steele County business sponsors are participating in an Environmental Protection Agency pilot project that could serve as a model for future regulations nationwide. Steele County residents are invited to add their opinions as these sponsors work with EPA representatives to form a plan of action, but few have come forward so far. Through a Steele County XLC project, participating businesses and industries are working to find innovative ways to achieve better environmental protection. According to a project description, lessons learned from Project XLC, which is part of a national initiative, will help the EPA redesign its approaches to regulation. XLC stands for eXcellence and Leadership for Communities. "We're really trying to gain public input," said Lisa Reiter, an environmental scientist with the EPA and a headquarters co-leader for the Steele County Program. There will be a Steele County XLC Community Advisory Committee meeting Thursday to inform community members of progress made on the Steele County XLC Final Proposal Agreement. Steele County's project will attempt to reduce the discharge of four metals that flow into the local waste-water treatment facility and implement water-use reduction controls. According to the project description, the sponsors also plan to minimize storm-water runoff at each facility and work with the local waste-water treatment facility to develop community-education materials. Reiter said finding new ways to improve environmental quality is an important part of improving communities. "It's an example of stepping up to the plate and saying, 'We'd like to make our community a little more livable,'" Reiter said. "Project XLC is the mechanism they're using to do this." Reiter said Steele County's project is unique in that it involves so many sponsors. Most of the pilot projects around the country have been sponsored by either a single large corporation or by a county or other unit of government. "This is a really cool project," she said. "EPA can take the pilot projects and use them as examples across the nation." The advisory-committee meeting will be held at 9 a.m. Thursday in the Training Conference Room of the Owatonna Fire Hall.