

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



Project XL Communities: Steele County



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. Project XLC, excellence and Leadership for Communities, encourages local public sector and community organizations to come forward with new approaches to demonstrate community-designed and directed strategies for achieving greater environmental quality consistent with community economic goals. The information and lessons learned from Project XL and XLC 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 May 2000, twenty-five pilot experiments are being implemented and approximately thirty additional projects are in various stages of development.

SUMMARY OF THE STEELE COUNTY PROJECT

The Steele County Project Sponsors, nine small-to-medium sized industrial facilities located in Owatonna and Blooming Prairie, Minnesota are committing to reduce the discharge of four priority metals that flow to the local waste water treatment facilities, and to implement significant water use reduction controls. The Owatonna County Sponsors will work to reduce the discharge of the four priority metals, while the Blooming Prairie County Sponsors will focus on the Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD), or organic material in wastewater; Total Suspended Solids (TSS); and Total Kjeldahl Nitrogen (TKN). The ten sponsors include:

- Truth Hardware Corporation
- Cybex International Inc.
- Crown Cork and Seal Company Inc.
- Elf Atochem
- Josten’s Inc.
- SPX Corp. Service Solutions
- Uber Tanning
- Viracon Inc.
- Wenger Corporation

The Owatonna Sponsors also plan to minimize storm water runoff at each participating facility and will work with the local wastewater treatment facility to develop and distribute to the community educational materials on the importance of minimizing storm water infiltration into the sewer system. The local wastewater treatment facilities in Owatonna and Blooming Prairie as well as the State of Minnesota are active participants in this project. The Steele County Project, EPA’s 24th Final Project Agreement, was signed on May 31, 2000.

SUPERIOR ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE

The project’s Sponsors have committed to four key areas of environmental performance that will enhance local environmental quality:

- Reduce the discharge of four metals (Chromium, Copper, Nickel, and Zinc) and three priority effluents (BOD, TSS, TKN) that flow into the local wastewater treatment facilities;
- Reduce the amount of water flowing to the local wastewater treatment facilities;
- Minimize the adverse impact of storm water on the local wastewater treatment facility by reducing the runoff from each participating facility and developing education materials for the local community; and
- Arrange and participate in training for the development of an ISO 14000-based Environmental Management System (EMS) for each

facility.

FLEXIBILITY

To facilitate the achievement of these environmental benefits, EPA has proposed to modify existing Federal environmental regulations. Specifically for the Owatonna Wastewater Treatment Facility (OWWTF) and the Owatonna participating sponsors, EPA has proposed that the OWWTF be given the discretion to: 1) express concentration-based limits for categorical pretreatment standards as mass-based limits; 2) implement incentive-based monitoring such that when metal discharge goals are met the frequency of monitoring may be reduced; 3) eliminate monitoring where a pollutant is not discharged; and 4) develop an alternative Significant Non-Compliance (SNC) approach where SNC would be published on the MPCA website rather than in the local newspaper. The Blooming Prairie Sponsor is not seeking regulatory flexibility.

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

Stakeholder involvement is key for a successful XLC project. The Steele County Sponsors have worked to ensure that those parties with a stake in the project are informed and have had an opportunity to fully participate in project development. Efforts have included:

- Contact with a diverse local and national stakeholder group;
- Holding regularly scheduled public meetings to inform the public;
- Requesting coverage of public meetings by the local media;
- Providing public access to project documents through State, EPA Regional and Headquarters offices, as well as via the Internet.

As project implementation proceeds, outreach to local stakeholders will continue via the local media and direct contact. National and local stakeholders will also have adequate access to information to judge the success of the project.

APPROACHES TO BE TESTED

- The effectiveness of an overall community-based approach to achieving superior environmental results.
- Can providing mass-based limits prior to full adoption of water conservation practices encourage facilities to incorporate water conservation measures into their operations to a greater extent?
- Will development of an alternative approach to SNC publication enhance a community-based approach to joint problem solving?

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FOR ELECTRONIC INFORMATION

More information about the Steele County XLC Project, or the Project XL Program, is available on the Internet at <http://www.epa.gov/projectxl>, or via Project XL's Information Line at 202-260-5754. Information is also available at the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's web site -- www.pca.state.mn.us/programs/projectxl/steele.html.