



**STAKEHOLDER ACTION PLAN: VASQUEZ BOULEVARD/I-70 SUPERFUND SITE –
ASSESSMENT, FINDINGS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Purpose and Background

The general purpose of the assessment is to develop a better understanding of the stakeholders, and relationships among them, in the Lead and Arsenic Residential Soil Clean-up and Community Health Program at the Vasquez Boulevard-I70 Superfund Site (Program).

For the purpose of this study a ‘stakeholder’ is any organization, organizational unit, program, or individual concerned with, affected by, or involved in the Program.

The EPA Site Program Manager, the client, wanted to improve his understanding in the hope that he could take additional actions that would result in as many community members as possible taking advantage of the services the Program offers.

A secondary purpose of the EPA Site Program Manager was for the assessment to provide an example of an analytical approach to involving stakeholders that could be used synergistically with the standard, largely descriptive, EPA Community Relations approach. He hoped to benefit other programs in this, and other communities, where EPA and others undertake efforts intended to improve environmental quality.

Ultimately, and more specifically and simply, the focus of the assessment became to:

- Identify additional influential stakeholders in the Program who might help increase Site residents’ participation in implementation; and
- Develop strategies for avoiding or minimizing potential conflict among community groups and individuals in the Program implementation remaining.

A final note, this assessment is a collaborative work developed by the analyst as observer, then participant, the EPA Site Project Manager, and the other stakeholders who invested their valuable time and participated in the effort by providing their perspectives, concerns, and insights.

Methods

The methods this assessment uses include:

- ‘Action’ or ‘critical’ research paradigm;
- A qualitative case study research design;
- Conceptual framework;
- Sampling design to select stakeholders who were considered influential and as ‘knowledgeable informants’ to participate in the study;
- Data development;
- Analyst as observer and participant;
- Analysis; and
- Write-up of results and recommendations.

Readers of this report should consider the results more as ‘working hypotheses’ rather than certain, conclusive findings. They should consider and question the plausibility of the conclusions. Hopefully, the results will be a stimulus to more discussion and analysis, and ultimately finding ways to improve implementation of the Program.

Findings

The report presents primarily the perceptions of the stakeholders who participated in the assessment. The analysis organized the perceptions into the following general categories:

- Potential ‘barriers’ to Program implementation (approximately 50);
- Positive perceptions about Program implementation (approximately 20);
- ‘Actions’ potentially addressing ‘barriers’ or otherwise improving Program implementation (approximately 54);
- Potentially influential stakeholders (44 organizations and 52 individuals identified); and
- Stakeholders perceived potentially to hold a position of leadership, centrality, and/or ‘bridge’ among other stakeholders in the Program (19 identified).

Each of these sets is in turn organized as it relates to:

- Context within which the Program is being implemented;
- Program as a whole;
- Soils testing, removal, and replacement components; and
- Community Health Program component.

The analyst communicated some of assessment participants’ concerns and suggestions to the EPA Site Program Manager as the assessment evolved. In several cases, the EPA Site Program Manager tried to address the concerns and implement the suggestions as the assessment continued.

Analysis

The analysis developed three sets of insights centering on:

- Barriers and actions:-- many issues have been fixed;
- Stakeholders: assessment identified 15 organizational and 28 individual stakeholders to involve in addition to those the EPA Community Involvement Plan (CIP) and Community Health Program response identified, but representation in ‘The Process’ appears to have decreased; and
- Potential for continuing tension and conflict are present in the implementation process and likely will continue for a seven significant sets of factors.

The seven significant factors that appear to motivate continuing tension, if not conflict, in implementation are:

- Tension between the legal-administrative and cultural realities of ‘The Process’;
- Perception held that the overarching process for representing and involving site residents in the Program as a whole is faulted;
- Opposite perspectives of CHP initiative that were held by participants
- Tension between the desire, if not need, for Program Managers to work bilaterally, as well as through ‘The Process’;
- Competition and differences among community organizations;
- Conflicts and negative affect present among some community groups and leaders within the Site; and
- Increasing representation and involvement in the Program and ‘The Process’.

Strategic and tactical action alternatives for consideration by Program Managers

The analyst provided the findings and presented the analysis described above to the Program Managers and the staff of other agencies supporting the Program on May 26, 2005. The report presents the alternatives he recommended in general summary form. The analyst asked Program Managers to consider the strategic alternatives first, then the specific tactical alternatives. They were informed that the tactical recommendations could be supplemented and refined as appropriate once they made a decision regarding the strategic approach they preferred.

Three strategic alternatives are discussed:

- Pursue a full ‘community development’ (CD) strategy;
- Do not pursue CD approach, ‘just do it’; and
- Tailor and focus implementation of ‘tactical tools’ as appropriate for Program component and Site social characteristics.

Four sets of tactical alternatives are discussed:

- Work within ‘The Process’;
- Improve communication, and community representation and involvement;
- Continue refining information basis for your decisions; and

- Evaluate – ask if you are using all the tools available to you as effectively as possible.

The group discussed the presentation and considered the strategic alternatives. The discussion seemed to begin focusing on the relative benefits of pursuing a ‘bridging approach’ as compared to relying on community leaders participating in the Program to date and the CHP Community Health Workers for contacting and involving Site residents that have not yet participated in the Program. By the time the meeting broke up, the group did not seem to achieve a consensus regarding the strategic approach that they thought would be most effective.