Hypoxia Task Force

EPA has promoted public-private collaboration by providing strong leadership in the Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Task Force (HTF), which is comprised of five federal agencies (that are also members of the WSC) and officials from 12 states. The HTF engages with public and private partners to improve water quality throughout the Mississippi River Basin and reduce the oxygen-deprived "dead" zone in the Gulf of Mexico.

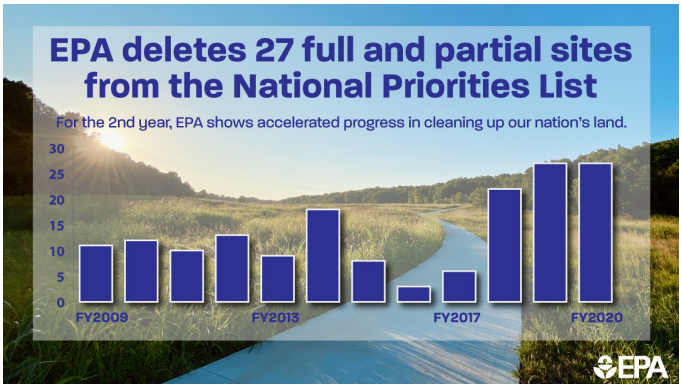
Building on a rich federal-state dialogue started at a WSC Nutrient Roundtable in May 2019, EPA helped convene seven new HTF workgroups in February 2020, made up of federal and state HTF members. The workgroups were charged to make progress on issues that HTF states identified as most important to helping them make progress on their nutrient reduction strategies, including critical research needs and support for adoption of innovative conservation practices. Additionally, in September 2020, EPA gave presentations on opportunities for the HTF states to use traditional EPA funding, (e.g., CWA Section 319 grants and SRFs) to support market-based programs that help further reduce excess nutrients in surface water, including the use of 319 funds to purchase verified water quality credits.

Working with the HTF's communications workgroup, EPA also led the effort to institutionalize strong stakeholder education and public awareness efforts to showcase ongoing state efforts to reduce excess nutrients. For example, EPA issued a quarterly newsletter to spotlight state successes and published a web-based story map of 28 successful state efforts. In 2019 and 2020, EPA also provided targeted and flexible funding to the Task Force states to help them implement their nutrient reduction strategies in ways that work best for each state to catalyze stakeholder effort in their communities.

LAND

Superfund

Under President Trump, we have reinvigorated EPA's Superfund program, which celebrated its 40th anniversary this year, by prioritizing cleaning up America's most contaminated sites and bringing them back into productive use. Over the last four fiscal years, EPA has fully or partially deleted 82 sites from the National Priorities List (NPL)–matching the site total over two terms of the previous administration. For the second consecutive year, EPA deleted all or part of 27 sites from the NPL in Fiscal Year (FY) 2020, which was the largest number of deletions in a single year since FY 2001. This represents the fourth year in a row that EPA has significantly increased the number of sites deleted from the NPL, helping communities move forward in reusing and redeveloping the land by making it clear that cleanup is complete.



In FY 2020, recognizing that only EPA can delete a site from the NPL, EPA employees initiated a project to evaluate and improve the deletion process. The result of this initiative is consolidation of the rulemaking process to streamline the administrative steps involved in deleting sites from the NPL, which has been an obstacle to completing site deletions. Going forward, this improvement is expected to reduce workloads, shorten process lead times, and lower program costs, resulting in sites ready for deletion being deleted rather than being caught in a burdensome administrative process.

EPA deletes sites or parts of sites from the NPL when no further cleanup is required to protect human health or the environment. While EPA encourages site reuse throughout the cleanup process, deletions from the NPL can help revitalize communities and promote economic growth by signaling to potential developers and financial institutions that cleanup is complete.

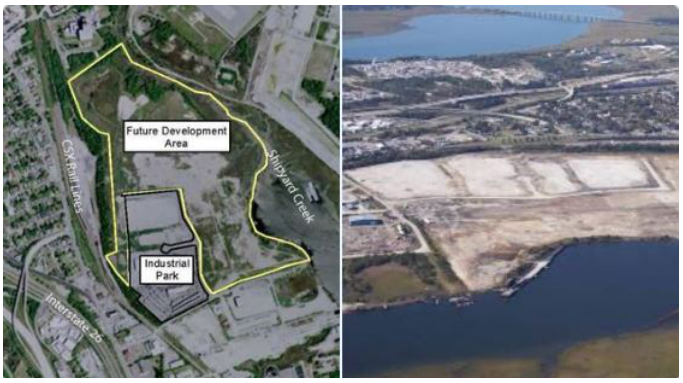
The agency's FY 2020 deletions include 14 full sites and parts of 13 sites.

Fully Deleted Sites from the NPL:

1. FMC Corp. (Dublin Road Landfill), Town of Shelby, New York
2. Hormigas Ground Water Plume, Caguas, Puerto Rico
3. First Piedmont Corp. Rock Quarry (Route 719), Pittsylvania County, Virginia
4. Fairfax St. Wood Treaters, Jacksonville, Florida
5. Red Panther Chemical Company, Clarksdale, Mississippi
6. Dupage County Landfill/Blackwell Forest, Warrenville, Illinois
7. Fridley Commons Park Well Field, Fridley, Minnesota
8. Scrap Processing Co., Inc., Medford, Wisconsin
9. Cimarron Mining Corp., Carrizozo, New Mexico
10. Tulsa Fuel and Manufacturing, Collinsville, Oklahoma
11. Annapolis Lead Mine, Annapolis, Missouri
12. JASCO Chemical Corp., Mountain View, California
13. American Crossarm & Conduit Co., Chehalis, Washington
14. Northside Landfill, Spokane, Washington

Partially Deleted Sites from the NPL:

1. Industri-Plex, Woburn, Massachusetts
2. Macalloy Corp., Charleston, South Carolina
3. Redstone Arsenal U.S. Army/NASA, Huntsville, Alabama
4. Allied Chemical & Ironton Coke, Ironton, Ohio
5. Douglass Road/Uniroyal Inc., Landfill Mishawaka, Indiana
6. Fort Wayne Reduction Dump, Fort Wayne, Indiana
7. Southeast Rockford Ground Water Contamination, Rockford, Illinois
8. U.S. Smelter and Lead Refinery, Inc., East Chicago, Indiana
9. Omaha Lead, Omaha, Nebraska
10. Anaconda Co. Smelter, Anaconda, Montana
11. Idaho Pole, Co., Bozeman, Montana
12. Libby Asbestos Site, Libby, Montana
13. Queen City Farms, Maple Valley, Washington



The Macalloy Corp Superfund site in Charleston, South Carolina was partially deleted in FY 2020 and holds economic opportunities for future redevelopment.

Administrator Emphasis List

EPA released the eighth, ninth, and tenth updates to the Administrator's Emphasis List (AEL) of Superfund sites targeted for immediate, intense action. The list makes visible EPA's commitment to facilitating progress at Superfund sites by resolving longstanding issues at cleanup projects across the country. The valuable management tool has repeatedly demonstrated efficacy in helping sites that have been challenged to overcome hurdles, in some cases for many years, clear those hurdles and move forward. The list is comprised of sites identified by EPA regional offices that will benefit from the administrator's immediate attention or action to move site cleanups forward and meet milestones.

Since the creation of the AEL in 2017, 20 sites have been removed from the list after achieving critical milestones that furthered site cleanup or solved issues slowing the pace of cleanups. This year's updates included:

- The Carter Carburetor Site in St. Louis, Missouri—a long-abandoned factory that was a blight on the inner-city neighborhood — has been remediated and will be handed over to the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater St. Louis, which operates a club next door. The Gateway PGA Reach Foundation will help with the redevelopment and aims to start an academy there, which — in addition to golf activities — will provide after-school resources, mentoring, and "a path to college education," for neighborhood youth.

- The USS Lead site in East Chicago, Indiana is a formerly heavy industrial area that is now a mostly residential and commercial area. Cleanup of lead and other contaminants was completed for many residential properties with 671 mostly residential properties recently deleted from the NPL. Other areas undergoing cleanup are primed for redevelopment.

- Petroleum Products in Pembroke Park, Florida had once been a used oil processing facility where large quantities of contaminated used oil and an estimated 50,0000 cubic yards of contaminated oily sludge was disposed of just above an aquifer that is the source of drinking water for nearby communities. Prior remedial approaches over the last 20 years were unable to remove most of the contamination, but with the focus of the AEL, EPA has proposed a remedial plan that will finally be able to remove the sludge and protect this vital drinking water source.

EPA monitors sites removed from the list to ensure that significant progress continues and cleanups move towards completion. One example is the Madison County Anschutz Mine site in Fredericktown, Missouri, where implementation of the property-wide cleanup of historical, surficial mine waste contamination is underway. Since the site was removed from the AEL, the site's lessee, Missouri Cobalt, has completed construction of its tailings reprocessing facility on the site and started recovering metals from on-site waste mine tailings, creating new jobs in the area.

CERCLA Section 108(b)

In 2020, under the authority of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) Section 108(b), EPA finalized its rulemakings on financial responsibility requirements for the Electric Power Generation, Transmission and Distribution; Petroleum and Coal Products Manufacturing; and Chemical Manufacturing industries. Following a detailed analysis of the financial risk to the federal Superfund program, EPA determined no new financial assurance requirements were merited for production, transportation, treatment, storage, or disposal of hazardous substances in these industries. This included evaluating the history of cleanups under Superfund, modern industry practices, applicable federal and state regulations, the industries' financial health and economic trends, and the risk of taxpayer-funded cleanups of facilities in these industries. This is consistent with EPA's interpretation of the statute, which was unanimously upheld by the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals in litigation challenging the agency's hardrock mining final action not requiring additional financial assurance. EPA's final rulemakings do not remove any existing requirements; rather they do not impose additional, new requirements.

Section 108(b) of CERCLA addresses potential requirements for financial responsibility to cover the costs associated with cleaning up releases or threatened releases of hazardous substances from facilities. In the 40 years since CERCLA became law, other state and federal requirements have been promulgated, so EPA has not needed to use this statutory authority to impose additional financial assurance requirements on classes of facilities to address the potential risk of releases of hazardous substances.

Office of Mountains, Deserts and Plains

In September, Deputy Associate Administrator Doug Benevento and Assistant Administrator for the Office of Land and Emergency Management (OLEM) Peter Wright joined Region 8 Administrator Greg Sopkin in announcing the Office of Mountains, Deserts and Plains at the Western Museum of Mining and Industry in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

EPA established the Office of Mountains, Deserts and Plains to assume oversight responsibilities for federal hardrock mining cleanup sites west of the Mississippi River; serve as a central contact for other federal agencies, states and tribes with responsibility for or impacted by these sites; and develop innovative technologies and adaptive management approaches to address legacy pollution. The office reports to the Assistant Administrator for Land and Emergency Management in Washington, D.C., but the office is located in Denver, Colorado. Additionally, the office supports efforts of conservation organizations to voluntarily undertake projects to improve conditions at abandoned mines (Good Samaritan projects).

Born out of lessons learned at sites across the country such as the Bonita Peak Mining District in Colorado and Silver Bow Creek Superfund site in Butte, Montana, EPA developed this new office to focus on the complex and unique issues related to hardrock mining cleanup and the communities in which they are located. The office seeks to improve EPA's ability to respond to the range of special issues and unique needs associated with Western mining sites in EPA Regions 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10. The new office will drive accountability, streamline cleanup efforts, and better facilitate coordination with states, local and tribal partners. It is the primary point of integration, communication, and coordination with federal land management agencies that oversee the federal lands where many of the current abandoned mines exist. By realigning existing resources and teaming up staff with expertise in these distinct ecosystems, the new Office of Mountains, Deserts and Plains will accelerate positive outcomes for Western communities and the environment.

Brownfields and Opportunity Zones

Under the Trump Administration, EPA's Brownfield and Land Revitalization Program has provided approximately $295 million directly to communities and nonprofits for cleanup and redevelopment, job creation, and economic development. These grants allow communities to leverage additional investment and provide communities with an opportunity to transform contaminated sites into community assets that attract jobs and achieve broader economic development outcomes. To date, communities participating in the Brownfields Program have been able to attract more than $33.6 billion in cleanup and redevelopment funding after receiving Brownfields Program funds.

A brownfield is a property where the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant. There are estimated to be more than 450,000 brownfields in the U.S.

In May, EPA announced the selection of 155 grants for communities and tribes totaling over $65.6 million in EPA brownfields funding through the agency's Assessment, Revolving Loan Fund, and Cleanup Grant Programs. These EPA grant programs support community revitalization in under-served and economically disadvantaged communities.

Of the communities selected this year, 118 can potentially assess or clean up brownfield sites in census tracts designated as federal Opportunity Zones. An Opportunity Zone is a designated economically distressed census tract where new private investment, under certain conditions, may be eligible for preferential tax treatment. Nearly 30 percent of the communities selected are receiving brownfields funding for the first time. The combined power of Brownfield Program funding and its ability to leverage other funding and jobs combined with Opportunity Zone

incentives have yielded impressive results in a short amount of time. Since June 1, 2018, EPA brownfields funding of just under $29 million in Opportunity Zones has led to accomplishments at 1,255 properties, which have leveraged over $403 million in additional funding and in excess of 1,500 jobs.

Communities that previously received brownfields grants used these resources to fund assessments and cleanups of brownfields and successfully leveraged 8.5 jobs per $100,000 of EPA brownfield grant funds spent. This has led to over 170,724 jobs in cleanup, construction, and redevelopment.

Highlights:
In Pottstown, Pennsylvania, Administrator Wheeler announced $6.9 million in supplemental funding for 25 current successful Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) grantees at the former Mercury Newspaper headquarters. The RLF supplemental funds are being provided to communities that have demonstrated success in using their Revolving Loan program to clean up and redevelop brownfield sites. The funds will be used to continue their progress in reusing vacant and abandoned properties and turning them into community assets such as housing, recreation and open space, health facilities, social services, and commerce opportunities.

The supplemental funds announced went to communities including the City of Pawtucket, Rhode Island; Camden Redevelopment Agency (New Jersey); the City of New York, New York; Montgomery County, Pennsylvania; the City of Atlanta, Georgia; Indiana Finance Authority (Indiana); the City of Tulsa, Oklahoma;, the City of Springfield, Missouri; Snowy Mountain Development Corporation (Montana); and Humboldt County, California, which have demonstrated success in using their RLF funds to clean up and redevelop brownfields sites. All communities receiving supplemental funds have census tracks designated as federal Opportunity Zones within their jurisdiction.

The former Mercury Newspaper site, located at the center of Pottstown, was remediated using an RLF loan. Redevelopment of this prominent building at the center of the borough will create the first boutique hotel in the borough creating jobs and tax revenue and support the downtown's burgeoning business and entertainment venues.

Grants awarded by EPA's Brownfields Program provide communities across the country with an opportunity to transform contaminated sites into community assets that attract jobs and achieve broader economic development outcomes while taking advantage of existing infrastructure. For example, Brownfields Program grants have been shown to increase local tax revenue and residential property values.

- A study of 48 brownfields sites found that an estimated $29 million to $97 million in additional local tax revenue was generated in a single year after cleanup. This is two to seven times more than the $12.4 million EPA contributed to the cleanup of these sites.
- Another study found that property values of homes near revitalized brownfields sites increased between 5 percent and 15 percent following cleanup.

Recycling

In November, Administrator Wheeler unveiled a modern, ambitious National Recycling Goal at the third annual America Recycles Day Summit to increase the national recycling rate to 50 percent by 2030. The most recent recycling data show that the national recycling rate, after being fairly stagnant for 20 years, peaked in the mid-30 percent range but dipped to 32 percent in 2018. The nation's recycling infrastructure has not kept pace with the current material stream. Just before the third annual America Recycles