

**TESTIMONY OF  
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U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
BEFORE THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND THE ECONOMY  
ENERGY AND COMMERCE COMMITTEE  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**JANUARY 18, 2018**

Chairman Shimkus, Ranking Member Tonko, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear today to discuss the Superfund program's accomplishments and challenges.

At EPA, cleaning up the nation's Superfund sites and returning them to communities for beneficial use is one of Administrator Pruitt's top priorities. The Superfund program is a premier example of how EPA can accomplish its core mission of protecting human health and the environment while simultaneously promoting jobs and economic growth in thousands of communities across the country.

The importance of the Superfund cleanup program to human health is highlighted by academic research by faculty at Princeton University, University of Chicago, and University of California, Berkley, published in the *American Economic Review*, that found that investment in Superfund cleanups reduces the incidence of congenital abnormalities in infants by as much as 25 percent for families living within 2,000 meters of a site.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Currie, Janet, Michael Greenstone, and Enrico Moretti. 2011. "Superfund Cleanups and Infant Health". *American Economic Review*, 101(3): 435-441

Superfund cleanups also provide significant economic benefits to communities. EPA has collected data showing that at 487 Superfund sites that are in reuse, 6,622 businesses are generating \$43.6 billion in sales and employ 156,352 people who earned a combined income of \$11.2 billion.<sup>2</sup> Work under the Superfund program improves property values as well. A peer-reviewed study by researchers at Duke University and University of Pittsburgh found that residential property values within three miles of Superfund sites increased 18.7 - 24.4% when sites were cleaned up and deleted from the NPL.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Superfund Removal/Emergency Response***

The Superfund program includes shorter-term removal actions to mitigate immediate threats to human health and the environment, and remedial actions, which address more complex and longer-term cleanup.

Each year, approximately 30,000 applicable release notifications are reported in the United States. While many of these are best handled by state and local responders, EPA works with the Coast Guard as our key partner in the federal government's response to these releases. EPA has a 24-hour-a-day response capability, and from FY 2007 through FY 2017, EPA completed or oversaw 3,655 response actions to protect communities and reduce the immediate threat to human health and the environment across the country. The total for FY 2017 alone was 255.

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<sup>2</sup> For more information on Redevelopment Economics and in depth case studies please use the link below.  
<https://www.epa.gov/superfund-redevelopment-initiative/redevelopment-economics>

<sup>3</sup> Gamper-Rabindran, Shanti and Christopher Timmons. 2013. "Does cleanup of hazardous waste sites raise housing values? Evidence of spatially localized benefits," *Journal of Environmental Economics and Management* 65(3): 345-360

### ***Superfund Remedial Program***

The Superfund Remedial program addresses complex, high-priority, longer-term cleanups. These contaminated sites reflect both legacy practices and more recent activity. There are currently 1,345 sites on the NPL, and 55 sites have been proposed for the list but not yet finalized.

Earlier this month, EPA announced that in 2017, the agency deleted all or parts of seven Superfund sites from the NPL. As of the end of fiscal year 2017, 394 sites had been deleted from the NPL and 836 Superfund sites were ready for anticipated use on a site-wide basis. Another key measure at Superfund sites is when human exposure has been brought under control. This information is currently available on the Superfund site profile website.

State partnerships are critical to the Superfund remedial cleanup efforts. They are well situated to evaluate what sites should be on the NPL in the first place. Through FY 2017, the EPA and its state, tribal, and federal partners completed final remedial assessments at more than 51,000 potentially contaminated sites, and just as with the sites added to the NPL that was announced last week, EPA routinely seeks the state's written concurrence before adding a site to the NPL.

As you can see, the Superfund Program is hard at work, and at the same time there is a great deal of work left to do. Administrator Pruitt has taken several steps over the past year to further improve and expedite the process of site remediation and to promote reuse. For example:

- To promote increased oversight, accountability and consistency in remedy selections, the Administrator retained the authority to select Superfund NPL remedies estimated to cost \$50 million or more at sites;

- Overall, the Administrator has directed the EPA regional offices to more closely and more frequently coordinate with the Administrator's office throughout the NPL process of developing and evaluating alternatives and selecting a remedy, particularly at sites with remedies estimated to cost \$50 million or more;
- In May, the Administrator established a Superfund Task Force to provide recommendations on an expedited timeframe on how the agency can restructure the Superfund cleanup process, realign incentives of all involved parties to promote expeditious remediation, reduce the burden on cooperating parties, incentivize parties to remediate sites, encourage private investment in cleanups and sites and promote the revitalization of properties across the country.

In July, EPA released the Task Force's report, which provided 42 recommendations to improve the Superfund Program. The Administrator issued a directive to implement a number of specific actions right away. In December, EPA addressed one of the recommendations and released a list of Superfund sites that Administrator Pruitt has targeted for immediate and intense attention. In developing this initial list, EPA considered sites that will benefit from the Administrator's direct engagement and have identifiable actions to protect human health and the environment. The list is designed to spur action at sites where opportunities exist to act quickly and move site cleanup and reuse forward. Sites will move on and off the list as appropriate. At times, there may be more or fewer sites based on where the Administrator's attention and focus is most needed.

EPA recently released an initial list of Superfund NPL sites with the greatest expected redevelopment and commercial potential. The sites on this list were found to have significant redevelopment potential based on previous outside interest, access to transportation corridors,

land values, and other critical development drivers. This list is not a complete list of sites in the Superfund pipeline with redevelopment potential, and sites will move on and off the list as appropriate. EPA remains dedicated to addressing risks at all Superfund sites, not just those on these lists. The Administrator has set an expectation for a renewed focus on accelerating work and progress at all Superfund sites nationwide.

### **CONCLUSION**

We appreciate the Committee's interest in the Superfund Program. Protecting human health and the environment by enhancing ongoing cleanup and reuse activities remains among Administrator Pruitt's top priorities. Such efforts will always be undertaken in partnership with other federal departments and agencies, states, tribes and local communities and in a manner that continues to protect human health and the environment.