



# **Dempster Industries Superfund Site COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PLAN**



**2022  
August**

# INTRODUCTION

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The goal of this Community Involvement Plan (CIP) is to encourage and facilitate community engagement throughout the Dempster Industries Superfund Site (site) cleanup. The CIP describes how EPA will involve the community and address local needs during the Superfund process. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the community will work together by using the tools described in this plan. Active public involvement is crucial to the success of any project. EPA's community involvement activities at the site are designed to inform the public of all cleanup activities and include the community in the decision-making process.

EPA defines the "community" as those people and entities who have an interest in or are affected by the site. EPA also recognizes that other stakeholders, including local, state and federal agencies, may have an interest in the site. This CIP is based on community interviews conducted in April 2022 with the affected community and stakeholders, in accordance with EPA's Superfund community involvement and cleanup guidance. The CIP is a "living document," meaning that it can be updated or revised over the course of site cleanup to reflect long-term changes in the community.

## **Community Involvement at the Dempster Industries Superfund Site**

Active and participatory community involvement is an important part of the cleanup process. It is also regulated under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA), also known as "Superfund." This CIP follows community involvement requirements in the Superfund Amendment and Reauthorization Act of 1986 (SARA) Section 117 and the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan (NCP) Section 300.430. EPA's Community Involvement Program is designed to facilitate participation of community members throughout the cleanup process, including the investigation phase and the remedy selection phase. EPA works closely with state and local agencies to provide community involvement throughout the Superfund process.

## Site Overview

The Dempster Industries Superfund Site is an abandoned industrial facility, formerly used by Dempster Industries in Beatrice, Nebraska. It served as the location of an agricultural implement manufacturer for over 100 years, but the site has been vacant since at least 2017. The site covers approximately 10 acres and is improved with 19 buildings that encompass approximately 250,000 square feet of space.

The city of Beatrice, along with the Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy (NDEE), began a site assessment in 2017 and identified contamination associated with historical activities throughout the property. Specifically, the site assessment identified contamination including heavy metals and semi-volatile organic compounds in surface soil and shallow groundwater, and electrical equipment containing polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). In February 2021, NDEE contacted EPA about the electrical equipment at the site that was found to be leaking PCB-containing oils onto the concrete floors and walls of the building.

EPA initiated a time-critical removal action for the PCB contamination in the building in November 2021, and removed the spilled PCB-containing oils and electrical equipment. During this removal, EPA also identified many abandoned containers suspected to hold hazardous substances throughout the building. In April 2022, EPA completed an assessment of those containers to determine an appropriate method of removal and disposal, which will be addressed in a future removal action.



*Aerial imagery of Dempster Industries Superfund Site.*

## About the Community

Beatrice is the county seat of Gage County in the southeast corner of Nebraska. The city is on the Blue River and is surrounded by agricultural land. The population of Beatrice is 11,908, according to 2015-2019 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates. The city population's racial makeup is 96% White, 1% Black, 1% American Indian, and 1% Asian.

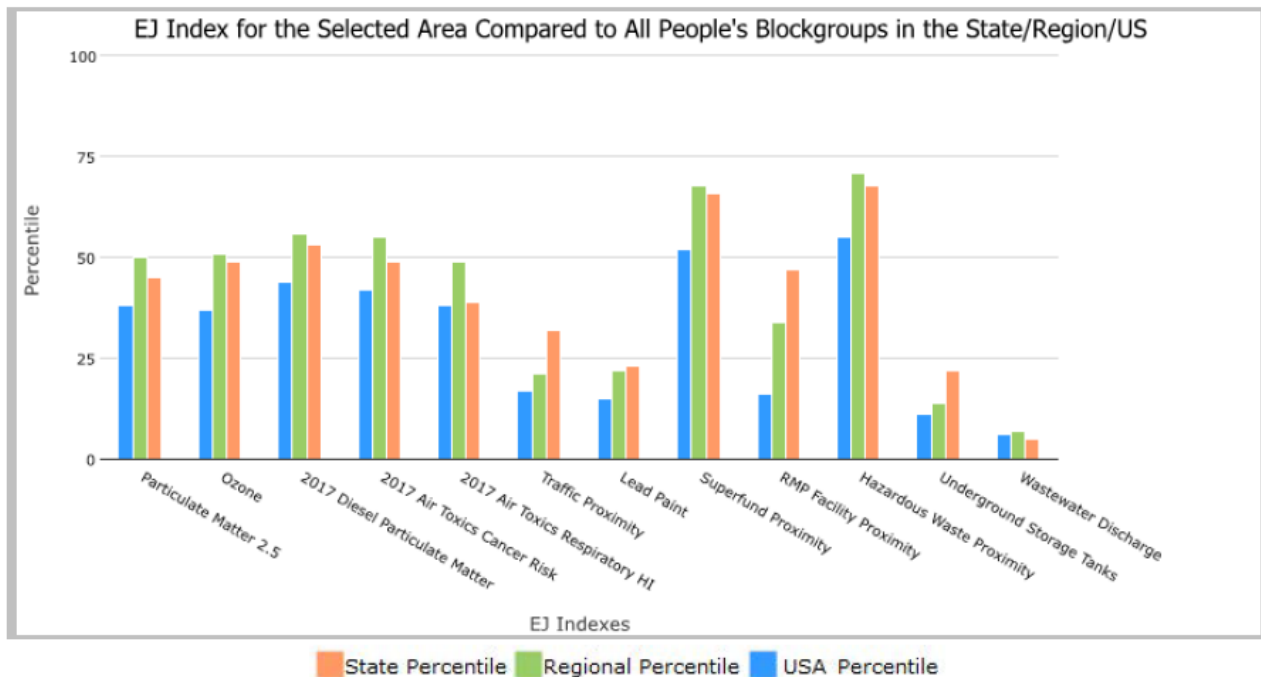
Various government and nongovernment groups represent the interests of the city. The city government includes an elected mayor and city council, as well as an appointed city administrator. The Lower Big Blue Natural Resources District is a local government entity responsible for managing issues affecting the Blue River. Gage Area Growth Enterprise (NGage) is a local organization focused on economic development in Gage County. The Beatrice Community Hospital & Health Center, Exmark Manufacturing Co., Beatrice State Development Center, and Beatrice Public Schools are the top employers in the city.

## Environmental Justice

Environmental Justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin or income, with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies.

## EJSCREEN

EJSCREEN is an environmental justice mapping and screening tool. It uses environmental indicators for a community to show potential exposures and demographic factors to show potential susceptibility. An EJSCREEN analysis for an area with a 1-mile radius from the site in March 2022 did not find environmental justice concerns in the surrounding community; none of the 11 indicators were at the 80th percentile or above compared to the rest of the United States or the rest of the state of Nebraska.



Source: EPA EJSCREEN

## EJSCREEN Quick Facts

To summarize how environmental indicators and demographics come together in the same location, EJSCREEN uses EJ Indexes. EJSCREEN has 11 EJ Indexes that reflect the 11 environmental indicators below. In the EJ Indexes, environmental indicators are combined with information about the low-income and minority population in a Census block group. EJSCREEN presents results in terms of percentiles, allowing the community to be compared to the rest of the state, EPA Region or nation.

- National Scale Air Toxics Assessment Air Toxics Cancer Risk
- National Scale Air Toxics Assessment Respiratory Hazard Index
- National Scale Air Toxics Assessment Diesel Particulate Matter (DPM)
- Particulate Matter (PM2.5)
- Ozone
- Lead Paint Indicator
- Traffic Proximity and Volume
- Proximity to Risk Management Plan Sites
- Proximity to Treatment Storage and Disposal Facilities
- Proximity to National Priorities List (NPL) Sites
- Wastewater Discharge Indicator

## Our Partners

Our partners include the Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy (NDEE) and the city of Beatrice.

## Key Contacts

### ***EPA Contacts***

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### ***NDEE Contacts***

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### ***City of Beatrice Contacts***

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## Elected Officials

### ***U.S. House of Representatives***

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## Overview of the CIP Process

Community interviews for the Dempster Industries Site took place in April 2022. City and county government officials, local business leaders, and residents near the site were identified and asked to participate in interviews. The summary of community issues is based on interviews with the government officials and a resident who agreed to participate.

## Community Issues and Concerns

### HUMAN HEALTH



The main concerns shared by participants were the health and safety of residents in Beatrice. Interviewees wanted to ensure contamination was dealt with and contaminated items were disposed of safely. The scope of the cleanup is large and includes multiple steps, and interviewees noted the importance of getting the project done right to effectively deal with the contamination.

### CLEANUP



The site is highly visible in town along Highway 77. Public interest related to the work is currently low, but if the building is torn down, then city officials anticipate more interest. Related to EPA work, interviewees were also concerned about the cost and time of the project, wondering how long the work would take to be completed and how much the work would ultimately cost.

### WATER



The potential for sediment erosion and contamination of the Blue River were also concerns. The Blue River is used for recreational purposes like fishing and kayaking.

### COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT



Interviewees noted that community members in Beatrice have a guarded attitude toward the federal government. They said community members may expect the issues at the site to be resolved quickly without understanding the time that studies, evaluation periods, and work take.

## Contaminants of Concern

### Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs)

Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) are considered a contaminant of concern (COC) at the Dempster Industries Site. COCs are chemicals that need to be addressed by a cleanup action because they are a potential threat to human health or the environment. PCBs were domestically manufactured from 1929 until 1979. They were used in hundreds of industrial and commercial applications because they are non-flammable and chemically stable, and have a high boiling point and electrical insulating properties. At the site, rainfall may exacerbate releases of PCBs to the environment and migration of PCBs to the Blue River. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) has a series of summaries about contaminants, called ToxFAQs. You can find a ToxFAQ on PCBs (listed as polychlorinated biphenyls) at [www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs).

# THE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT ACTION PLAN

## Introduction to the Action Plan

EPA used information gathered during community interviews and from other sources to develop this Action Plan to address the community’s needs, concerns, questions and expectations, as well as the community’s communication styles and preferences.

## Community Involvement Objectives

EPA endeavors to keep community members informed about the site cleanup process. EPA’s community involvement objectives at the Dempster Industries Site include:

- Providing timely, site-specific information to community members so they can closely follow site-related activities.
- Identifying direct EPA contacts who will share information about the site for community members.
- Maintaining communications between EPA and local officials to help ensure those officials are informed of site-related activities, and that EPA benefits from the officials' insights regarding the community and its concerns, the site and its history, and local regulatory issues.

## Ongoing Communication

EPA will continue to work with the city of Beatrice, NDEE, and community organizations and community members to ensure that any important updates or information regarding the site are shared directly with the public.

To sign up for the site email list, please contact: [holcomb.amelia@epa.gov](mailto:holcomb.amelia@epa.gov).

## Community Involvement Tools and Activities

EPA has identified and developed a variety of tools and activities to better engage with and involve the community.



### Educational Materials

Fact sheets and public notices will be published with site updates as needed. Past education materials are available at the site’s EPA webpage by clicking on “Reports and Documents.”



### Web Page

Cleanup documents are published to the site’s webpage as needed, which is found at: [www.epa.gov/superfund/dempster](http://www.epa.gov/superfund/dempster).



### Email

Email is the preferred method of communication for government officials involved in the Dempster Industries Site. EPA will notify local contacts with site updates via email as needed.



### Local Media Outlets

EPA can utilize the following media outlets as needed:

**Newspaper:** Beatrice Daily Sun, publishes daily Tuesday-Saturday

**Radio station:** KWBE 94.7FM, 1450 AM, hosts weekly “Ask the Mayor” program

**Television:** Channel 181, city of Beatrice cable channel, broadcasts content like city council and school board meetings



### Information Repository

Site project information is available to the public at web repositories. To view documents for this site, please visit EPA’s webpage at:

[www.epa.gov/superfund/dempster](http://www.epa.gov/superfund/dempster).

If you do not have internet access, you can view these documents online at the **Beatrice Public Library**, 100 N. 16th St., Beatrice, NE 68310; 402-223-3584.



### Community Outreach

The Beatrice Public Library and Beatrice YMCA could host public availability sessions. When EPA gets sampling results back, holding a public availability session is an option to explain EPA’s work and timeline to the public. Local organizations like the Kiwanis Club and Gage County Fire Response could be interested in allowing EPA to brief members at one of the organization’s scheduled meetings.

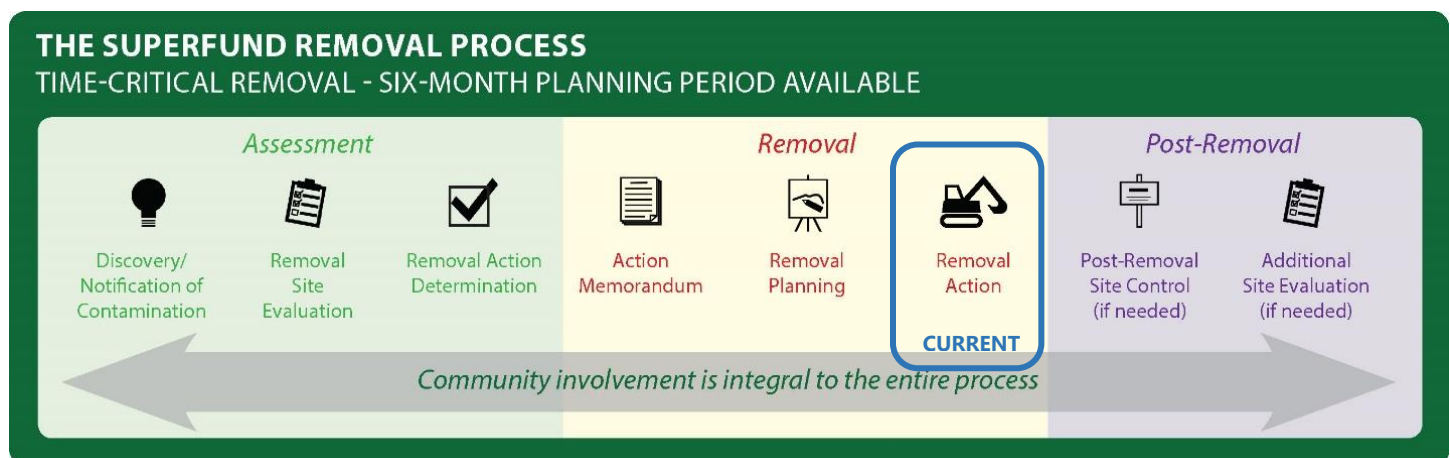
The Facebook page “Beatrice Neighborhood Watch” is a popular social media page where people share information. Local banks like Security First and Pinnacle banks, as well as St. John’s Church, have local bulletins where people share flyers.

## Superfund Removal Process

Removal responses are common at Superfund sites when the contamination poses an immediate threat to human health and the environment. Removal actions tend to be swift responses to immediate threats from hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants to eliminate dangers to the public. Removals are classified as either emergency, time-critical or non-time-critical, depending on the extent and type of contamination.

### Superfund Removal Process – Time-Critical Removal

**Time-critical removals** are situations where EPA determines that a removal is appropriate and on-site removal activities must begin within six months. Examples include removal of drums or small volumes of contaminated soil and stabilization of lagoons. The following section describes the general steps in a time-critical removal.





***Assessment***

After the contamination is discovered, EPA evaluates if the site poses a threat to people and the environment and whether hazards need to be addressed immediately or additional site information will be collected.

***Removal***

The Action Memorandum describes the cleanup method chosen for the site and the reasons for the selection. Removal planning is the phase during which the plans for removal are designed, and then removal action begins.

***Post-Removal***

After the removal action, site controls are implemented to protect human health and the environment if needed. Additional site evaluation may take place to determine whether further action is needed.

## **Contact Information**

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