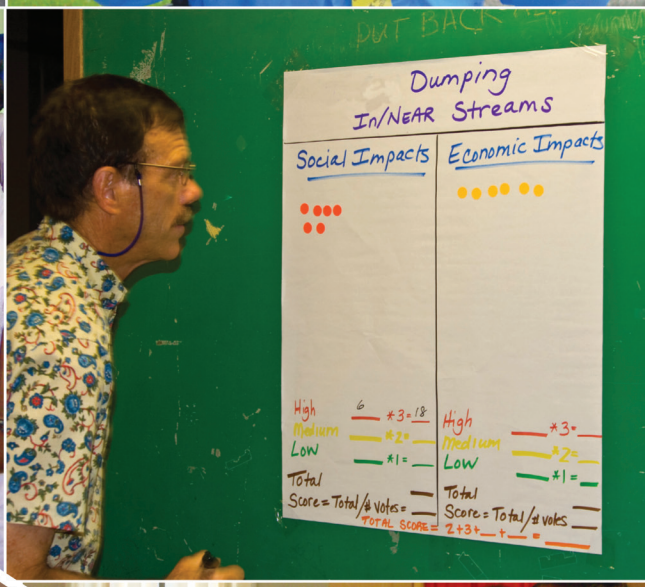
United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

Meaningful Engagement, One Community at a Time



TASC

Technical Assistance Services for Communities Program

2007-2009 Annual Report

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Welcome to EPA's Technical Assistance Services for Communities (TASC) program. The past two years have been an exciting, engaging and productive time. Since its inception in late 2007, the program has put a powerful idea – providing educational and technical assistance to communities affected by environmental challenges – into practice, meaningfully engaging with more than 50 communities nationwide. TASC is making a difference, one community at a time.

EPA's Office of Superfund Remediation and Technology Innovation (OSRTI), working in partnership with EPA's Federal Facilities, Restoration and Reuse Office (FFRRO) and EPA's Office of Resource Conservation and Recovery (ORCR), is committed to ensuring that communities facing environmental challenges have the high-quality, independent educational and technical assistance needed to empower them to meaningfully participate in addressing these issues.

This is the TASC program's first report on its activities to date. The pages of this report share some of the program's compelling stories and projects. We hope that these stories illustrate how the program is making a difference in people's lives and benefiting communities across the country.

As we look to the future, we look forward to building new relationships and identifying new ways in which EPA can meaningfully engage with communities through the TASC program.

James E. Woolford
OSRTI Director

The TASC Program:
An Overview

TASC is a national EPA program that provides educational and technical assistance to communities affected by hazardous waste sites regulated by the Superfund and Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) programs. The program also helps communities address other environmental problems, like air and water issues.

The TASC program is designed to be flexible and responsive, moving rapidly to meet community needs. Recognizing that each community is unique, the program works with diverse stakeholders to provide a wide range of services, including:

Sharing needed information materials.

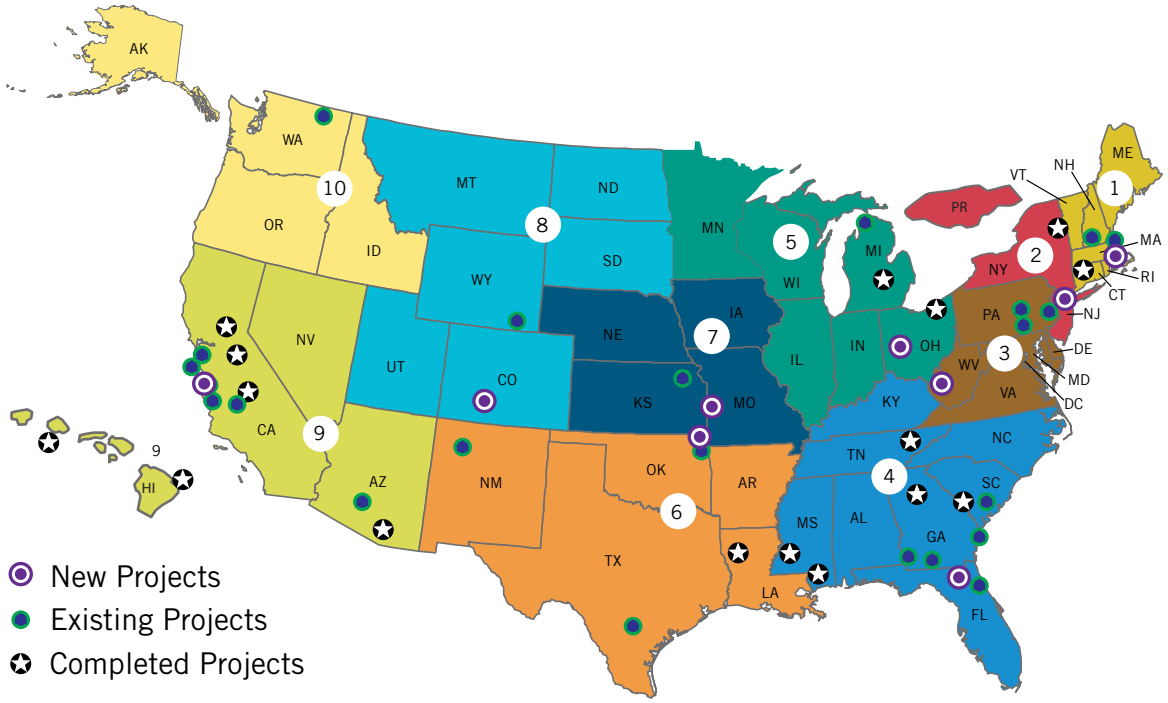
Offering educational workshops and trainings.

Enabling access to independent technical expertise.

Developing effective technical assistance plans and approaches.

Providing job training through the Superfund Job Training Initiative (SuperJTI).

Supporting community partnerships that reduce environmental risks through supplemental services for communities in EPA's CARE program.



The TASC Program: By the Numbers

Communities Served:	51
Through 2009:	32
First Quarter, 2010:	19
EPA Regions Represented:	10
States Represented:	30
Projects with Environmental Justice Communities:	21
Superfund Job Training Initiative Projects:	5
National Meetings Serving Multiple Community Organizations:	4
Technical Assistance Needs Assessments Conducted:	8
Agency Documents Reviewed:	50+
Meetings Facilitated:	30+

Why TASC?

Addressing Community Challenges…

Communities can face challenges when seeking to participate in decision-making to address environmental problems. There may be limited information available. Available information may be overly technical. Communities may be unfamiliar with decision-making stages and timeframes. And unfortunately, expertise to address environmental issues can often be too narrowly defined, excluding communities, even though community members will be among the parties most affected by any proposed plan.

Recognizing Community Expertise…

TASC recognizes that community members have unparalleled expertise to bring to the table. For years, they have worked at or lived near contaminated sites. After challenges have been addressed, they will be among the long-term stewards ensuring that human health is protected and even guiding some sites back into reuse. TASC provides tools and resources, like technical advisor services, to ensure that communities are well-informed and able to share their expertise as part of the decision-making process.

Providing Technical Resources…

TASC technical advisor services are provided through a national EPA contract with E^2 Inc., an EPA contractor based in Charlottesville, Virginia. Technical assistance is provided by a dedicated team of Technical Assistance Specialists located nationwide. E^2 Inc. also maintains an online database of public health, outreach, engineering and scientific experts to address highly specialized technical assistance needs.

Increasing Community Understanding:
Information Assistance

Communities contact TASC with important information needs regarding pressing environmental issues. TASC works with these communities to create accessible information materials like fact sheets and maps that increase community members' understanding and help them participate actively and effectively in addressing these issues. TASC also translates documents into other languages to ensure that they are widely accessible.

Bilingual Fact Sheets for Community Organizations' Healthy Housing Initiative in Cleveland, Ohio

Two community organizations in northeastern Ohio approached EPA's Office of Environmental Justice, EPA Region 5 and the TASC program. The Cleveland Tenants Organization (CTO) and Environmental Health Watch (EHW) were working in partnership on the Tenants for Healthy Housing initiative, designed to provide residents with environmental health education and tenants' rights information. The organizations were looking to reach an expanded audience with information materials on topics including asthma triggers, carbon monoxide and childhood lead poisoning.

TASC created eight accessible, visually compelling fact sheets in English and Spanish, which were distributed to community members and posted online. In 2010, TASC is providing additional assistance for training and community outreach, and an EPA CARE program grant has been provided to help several Cleveland neighborhoods address environmental health concerns.

Fact Sheet and Biannual Newsletter for Community Advisory Group in Leon Valley, Texas

The Bandera Road Community Advisory Group (CAG) was formed in 2007 to provide a community forum to learn about, discuss and provide input on the cleanup of the Bandera Road Ground Water Plume Superfund site near San Antonio in Leon Valley, Texas.

Information assistance was a primary CAG goal; TASC responded rapidly, developing a site history fact sheet that introduced the site and summarized response actions completed to date. In 2009, TASC prepared biannual newsletters for the CAG in English and Spanish, updating the community on the site's status. TASC staff also attended the CAG's quarterly meetings, serving as a technical resource for the community. In 2010, TASC is continuing to provide these services, as well as reviewing and summarizing upcoming site documents and providing educational presentations for the community, as needed.

Enhancing Skills: Community Education

TASC's trainings and workshops bring community members together for shared learning experiences. In some cases, trainings raise community knowledge about an environmental issue. In other communities, TASC's focused workshops ensure that community leaders have the information needed to address a high-priority concern. In eastern Pennsylvania, TASC's community education efforts have led to strengthened community relationships and improved coordination between the community and EPA.

Reuse Assessment and Communication Training in Ambler, Pennsylvania

At the BoRit Asbestos Superfund site, the community has been very engaged in the site's planned cleanup. EPA works closely with the site's Community Advisory Group (CAG) to provide a public forum for community members to discuss their site-related priorities and concerns and better understand the Superfund cleanup process. The CAG has 25 members, representing community stakeholders, environmental organizations, local governments, local businesses, medical and academic interests, and state and federal agencies.

TASC conducted a detailed needs assessment with the community and EPA Region 3 in 2009. TASC then worked with the community on a reuse assessment to inform the remedial process and local planning efforts. The CAG recommended future use scenarios that preserve parks and open space and compliment projected development near the site. TASC also provided a one-day training for CAG members. Through exercises focused on effective communication, active listening, conflict styles and effective problem-solving, the training enhanced CAG members' communication and conflict resolution skills, and also helped build relationships and trust. The training provided a way for the CAG to better recognize diverse viewpoints and incorporate conflict as a positive force for innovation.

Did You Know?

EPA also has technical assistance resources specifically available for communities affected by Superfund National Priorities List (NPL) sites. For more information about EPA's Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) program, please visit www.epa.gov/superfund/community/tag.

Assessing Community Needs:
Technical Assistance Plan Development

For communities requiring technical assistance, TASC works closely with them to evaluate their needs and develops detailed plans to guide the program's services and address the communities' needs as rapidly and comprehensively as possible.

Evaluation and Planning Assistance in Washington State Leads to EPA TAP Program Funding

Beginning in July 2008, TASC provided assistance to Citizens for a Clean Columbia (CCC), a volunteer organization involved in the Upper Columbia River site cleanup in northwest Washington State. TASC's needs assessment identified several priorities, including identifying technical issues and developing a community outreach plan. TASC helped CCC develop a technical assistance work plan, which enabled CCC to apply to EPA's Technical Assistance Plan (TAP) program for funding for a technical advisor. Following CCC's successful application, TASC also helped the organization identify and select a technical advisor.

Key Technical and Redevelopment Issues Identified at Former U.S. Navy Facility in Massachusetts

Working with EPA Region 1, TASC conducted a needs assessment at the South Weymouth Naval Air Station site. Located in three towns in eastern Massachusetts, the 1,450-acre site has been the subject of significant redevelopment interest since the closure of the U.S. Navy facility in 1997. TASC assisted a community organization, Advocates of Rockland, Abington, Weymouth and Hingham (ARAWH), in evaluating potential impacts related to the site's cleanup and redevelopment. The needs assessment addressed the site's cleanup, community goals and concerns, and redevelopment considerations. It also provided recommendations to guide future site interactions between EPA, other agencies and local communities.

"I don't think I could have asked for a better representative. TASC's Technical Assistance Specialist is professional, quick with her responses to the community, has a very good connection with Citizens for a Clean Columbia, and is a pleasure to work with."
~ Region 10 TASC Project Participant

Providing Assistance and Consultation:
Independent Technical Expertise

Once communities have worked with TASC to determine their technical assistance needs, the program's Technical Assistance Specialists move into action. These specialists review reports and information, attend meetings and identify potential issues of community interest. The specialists meet regularly with communities to explain their findings, facilitate meetings and help communities identify strategies for addressing environmental problems.

Wyoming Utility Requests Technical Assistance Services for Review of Proposed Response Action

Trichloroethene (TCE) has been detected at the former F.E. Warren AFB Nuclear Atlas Missile Site 4 in Laramie County, near Cheyenne, Wyoming, resulting in a contaminated ground water plume. The contamination is being addressed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). In October 2009, the City of Cheyenne's Board of Public Utilities (BOPU) contacted EPA Region 8 with a request for technical assistance, seeking opportunities for the community to become more engaged in efforts to address the TCE contamination.

TASC responded quickly, meeting with local stakeholders, and Technical Assistance Specialists are now working with the community to review reports and information prepared by USACE. To date, the specialists have provided a summary of potential technical issues related to a proposed TCE treatment facility. In 2010, the specialists will continue to review technical information and provide the community with understandable summaries and presentations, enabling informed community members to interact effectively with USACE.

Technical Reviews in Tennessee and Michigan

Roane County, Tennessee:

In 2009, TASC Technical Assistance Specialists provided the community with technical reviews of EPA's draft Community Involvement Plan and the Agency's work plan for an upcoming response action at the TVA Kingston Fly Ash site in eastern Tennessee.

Tittabawassee River/Saginaw River and Bay, Michigan:

In September 2009, negotiators agreed on a proposed settlement to proceed with a Superfund evaluation for the site. TASC Technical Assistance Specialists provided community groups with a technical review of the settlement and shared their findings at a December 2009 public meeting. Following review of community comments, EPA and Michigan DEQ approved the AOC in January 2010.

TASC and the CARE Program:
Addressing Pollution Risks, Together

CARE is an EPA grant program that offers an innovative way for communities to organize and take action to reduce toxic pollution in their environments. TASC provides supplemental services to CARE grant communities, working closely with the CARE program. Through CARE, communities create partnerships that determine local environmental priorities and implement solutions that address those priority concerns. By providing financial and technical assistance, EPA empowers CARE communities to improve their environment.

Environmental Education and Technical Assistance for Hawaii's Wai'anae Coast

Oahu's Wai'anae Coast, home to the largest population of Native Hawaiians in the state, is also home to some of Hawaii's most significant environmental resources. The community was the recipient of a CARE cooperative agreement in 2008. The Ka Wai Ola O Wai'anae Moku (Water for Life in Wai'anae District) project has assessed the impact of humans and pollutants on the Wai'anae Coast.

Beginning in June 2009, TASC worked with CARE, EPA Region 9, the Pacific American Foundation and the community to provide educational materials focused on water quality, land and air issues. A TASC Technical Assistance Specialist presented this information at meetings in August and September 2009 and served as a technical resource for the community. The information provided by TASC has helped the community analyze and prioritize environmental issues.

Facilitation Services, Partnership Development and Outreach for Georgia's SAFE Coalition

Neighborhood Planning Unit V, located in southern Atlanta, is a low-income, predominantly African-American community facing high unemployment and low educational attainment. The community is also impacted by negative health outcomes and multiple environmental stressors. To help the community, two local organizations and Georgia State University's Institute of Public Health formed the South Atlanta for the Environment (SAFE) coalition. SAFE was awarded a CARE cooperative agreement in 2008 to identify, assess, publicize, reduce and prevent environmental health hazards. Since November 2009, TASC has provided SAFE with facilitation services, provided strategic planning assistance and developed a fact sheet summary of SAFE's Environmental Assessment Report to communicate project findings to community residents.

Did You Know?

EPA has been providing educational and technical assistance services to communities for almost two decades. TASC was preceded by EPA's Technical Outreach Services for Communities (TOSC) program, which assisted communities between 1994 and 2006. Services were provided to Native American communities through the Technical Outreach Services for Native American Communities program (TOSNAC). Brownfield communities continue to receive assistance through the Technical Assistance to Brownfields (TAB) Communities program.

Across the TASC and TOSC programs, EPA's goal has been to provide high-quality, independent educational and technical assistance services to communities. Informed, engaged communities are vital partners in ensuring EPA's mission to protect human health and the environment.

Environmental Justice:
Ensuring Access to a Safe and Healthy Environment

All Americans should have access to a safe, healthy environment. Through the TASC program as well as other programs, EPA seeks to address social equity concerns, working to resolve situations where historically under-represented lower-income communities and people of color are burdened with significant environmental challenges. In 2009, the TASC program provided support for a series of projects as EPA engaged with environmental justice communities across the United States.

Environmental Justice Summit in Georgia

TASC facilitated a meeting in Atlanta, Georgia that brought together 15 environmental justice communities from six southeastern states to share their environmental concerns with EPA Region 4's Acting Regional Administrator and senior Region 4 staff.

Community Listening Session in Mississippi

EPA Assistant Administrator Mathy Stanislaus visited Picayune, Mississippi for a TASC-hosted Community Listening Session to explore ways to address regional environmental justice issues and environmental concerns.

Environmental Justice Educational Network and Action Plan in Massachusetts

Community members interested in forming a environmental justice network in New Bedford, Massachusetts requested TASC's assistance. TASC is providing a technical review of site documents and helping New Bedford establish an educational network and action plan to address environmental justice issues.

Facilitation Services in Louisiana

In coordination with the Louisiana Environmental Justice Community Organizations Coalition, TASC facilitated an October 2009 community meeting with the owners of a refinery in Shreveport, sustaining the community's ongoing dialogue regarding local environmental concerns.

Collaborative Approaches and Environmental Law Workshops for Tribal Communities

TASC and EPA's Office of Environmental Justice partnered with Regions 5, 8 and 9 to deliver workshops for tribal communities on collaborative problem-solving (CPS), appropriate dispute resolution (ADR) and environmental law. In November 2009, TASC Technical Assistance Specialists worked with EPA staff to develop and deliver trainings in New Mexico, Wyoming and at Region 9's Navajo Uranium Contamination Stakeholder Workshop.

EPA and TASC also delivered training for representatives from tribal and federal governments, community organizations, and tribal citizens (Shoshone and Northern Arapaho tribes). The meeting focused on environmental justice concerns, traditional peacekeeping processes, intercultural communication and dispute resolution tools. Participants identified ways to improve communications on water issues and reached agreements to enhance cooperation and communication.

In 2010, TASC expects to support CPS and ADR trainings in Wisconsin and Minnesota.

"Not only did [EPA Administrator] Lisa Jackson listen to our concerns but she also provided us with some of the best resources EPA has available … This is the ground work for a lot of work yet to be done to totally make sure the area is safe for all."

~Region 1 TASC Project Participant

The Superfund Job Training Initiative (SuperJTI): Training and Employment for Underserved Citizens

SuperJTI is a job readiness program that provides training and employment opportunities for underserved citizens living in communities affected by Superfund sites. Many of these areas are environmental justice communities. Through SuperJTI, TASC's goal is to help these communities develop job opportunities that remain long after a Superfund site is cleaned up.

Pioneering SuperJTI at the Savannah River Site in Aiken, South Carolina (SRS SuperJTI)

In 2009, the SuperJTI program at the Savannah River Site (SRS) provided career development opportunities for 20 trainees living near SRS in south-central South Carolina and eastern Georgia. Through a partnership with the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), community organizations like The Imani Group and site contractors, SRS SuperJTI provided local job-seekers with new skills and work experience. From January through May 2009, SRS SuperJTI staff hosted community meetings and candidate orientations to publicize the training opportunity and attract interested candidates. These meetings were attended by more than 350 people.

After a rigorous screening process, 20 trainees completed the two-part SRS SuperJTI program, which provides life skills and technical training. Following graduation in July 2009, the trainees were placed into positions as production operators and material handlers at SRS. The SRS Citizen's Advisory Board recognized the program for its success in late 2009; TASC and EPA Region 4 are providing a second SRS SuperJTI program in 2010, working with DOE, The Imani Group and other community partners.

Looking Forward: SuperJTI Projects Under Way Nationwide in 2010

In addition to the second SuperJTI project in South Carolina, the program is providing job training opportunities at the following sites in 2010:

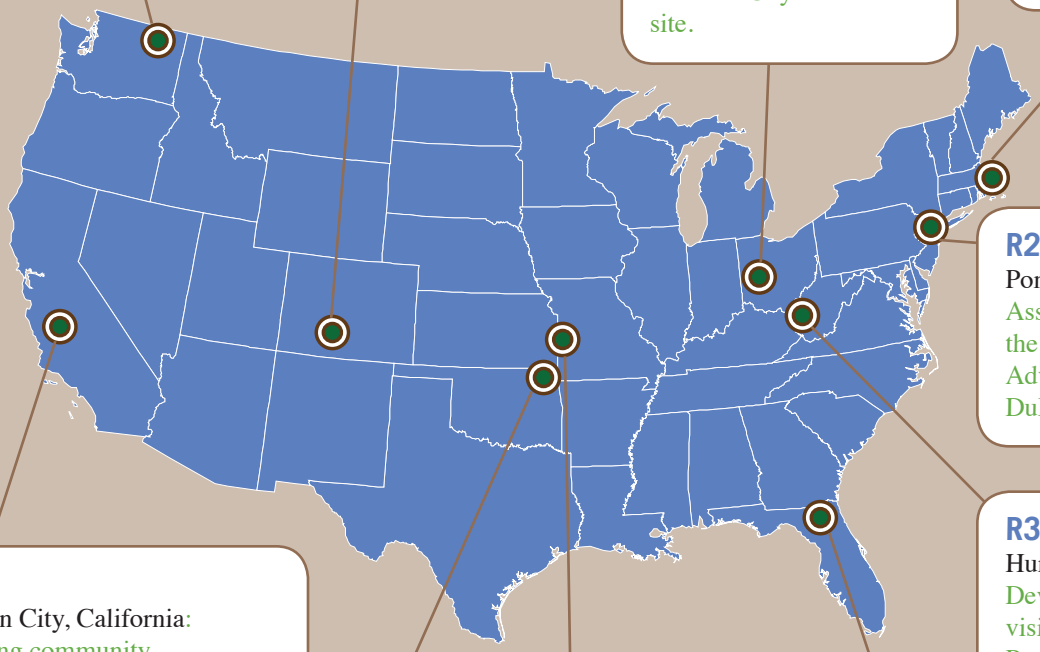
- Fort Ord (Monterey County, California)
- Jacksonville Ash and Brown's Dump (Jacksonville, Florida)
- Tar Creek (Ottawa County, Oklahoma)

Looking to the Future

Since the program's inception in late 2007, TASC has worked closely with communities to provide high-quality services that effectively and comprehensively address their educational and technical assistance needs.

Building on this strong foundation, the TASC program is also looking forward, recognizing that our partner agencies and programs and the diverse communities we work with will continue to identify new needs, opportunities and priorities. In 2010 and beyond, TASC will develop flexible, creative educational approaches and seek innovative technical assistance solutions that meaningfully engage communities and truly make a difference, one community at a time.

Some of TASC's 2010 activities are highlighted below.



R10
Northport, Washington:
Providing technical assistance to the community regarding the cleanup of the Upper Columbia River.

R8
San Luis Valley, Colorado:
Developing educational materials for the community on well water quality.

R5
Tremont City, Ohio:
Helping the community understand the proposed cleanup plan for the Tremont City Barrel Fill site.

R1
Somerville, Massachusetts:
Facilitating design charrettes for the community, which is an EPA CARE grant recipient.

R2
Pompton Lakes, New Jersey:
Assisting the community with the formation of a Community Advisory Group for the DuPont Pompton Lakes site.

R3
Huntington, West Virginia:
Developing community visioning meetings for the Port of Huntington Tri-State Collaborative Geographic Initiative.

R9
Kettleman City, California:
Addressing community information needs regarding environmental health concerns, including birth defects.

R7
Kansas City, Missouri:
Supporting the community's formation of a Community Advisory Group for the Bannister Federal Complex site.

R6
Tar Creek, Oklahoma:
Providing technical assistance to the community under the SuperJTI program.

R4
Jacksonville, Florida:
Identifying public health and environmental justice concerns and priorities under the SuperJTI program.

TASC Community Profiles: Making a Difference

Bridget Rapoza ~ Pepe`ekeo Point, Hawaii

Shortly after moving into the Pepe`ekeo Point neighborhood on the Hamakua coast of Hawaii's Big Island, Bridget Rapoza and her family learned of plans to reopen a nearby coal-burning power plant, this time using biomass as a fuel source. Concerned about potential pollution as well as odors, noise and traffic, Rapoza joined the community group Preserve Pepe'ekeo Health & Environment and contacted EPA Region 9 and the TASC program. "The community was seeking to learn more about the power plant and its potential environmental and human health effects," Rapoza recalled.

TASC researched potential environmental and health impacts of biomass energy facilities for the community. Rapoza credits TASC's Technical Assistance Specialists with doing an excellent job of educating the community as well as responding promptly and professionally to all questions from different community residents. "Hopefully the report will be effective in educating all parties planning for biomass in Hawaii and elsewhere," Rapoza said. "Nobody is against truly clean renewable energy. But we want to do it in a way that makes long-term, intelligent, logical sense. We also want a healthy place that's safe for our kids."

Eddie Johnson ~ New Bedford, Massachusetts

As President of New Bedford's C.L.E.A.N. (Citizens Leading Environmental Action Network), Eddie Johnson leads local efforts to clean up the Parker Street Waste site, which encompasses homes, businesses and two schools in southeastern Massachusetts. Through C.L.E.A.N., Johnson reached out to the TASC program in 2009 for technical assistance.

"I discovered TASC through the program's website," Johnson recalled. "TASC helped us get the ball rolling, the technical assistance helped us understand the site and how we could make something happen here. It has led us to a cleanup plan that includes additional site testing, data analysis, remediation and legal expertise. We are optimistic for the future." The community has worked with two Technical Assistance Specialists, whose assistance Johnson describes as "beyond invaluable."

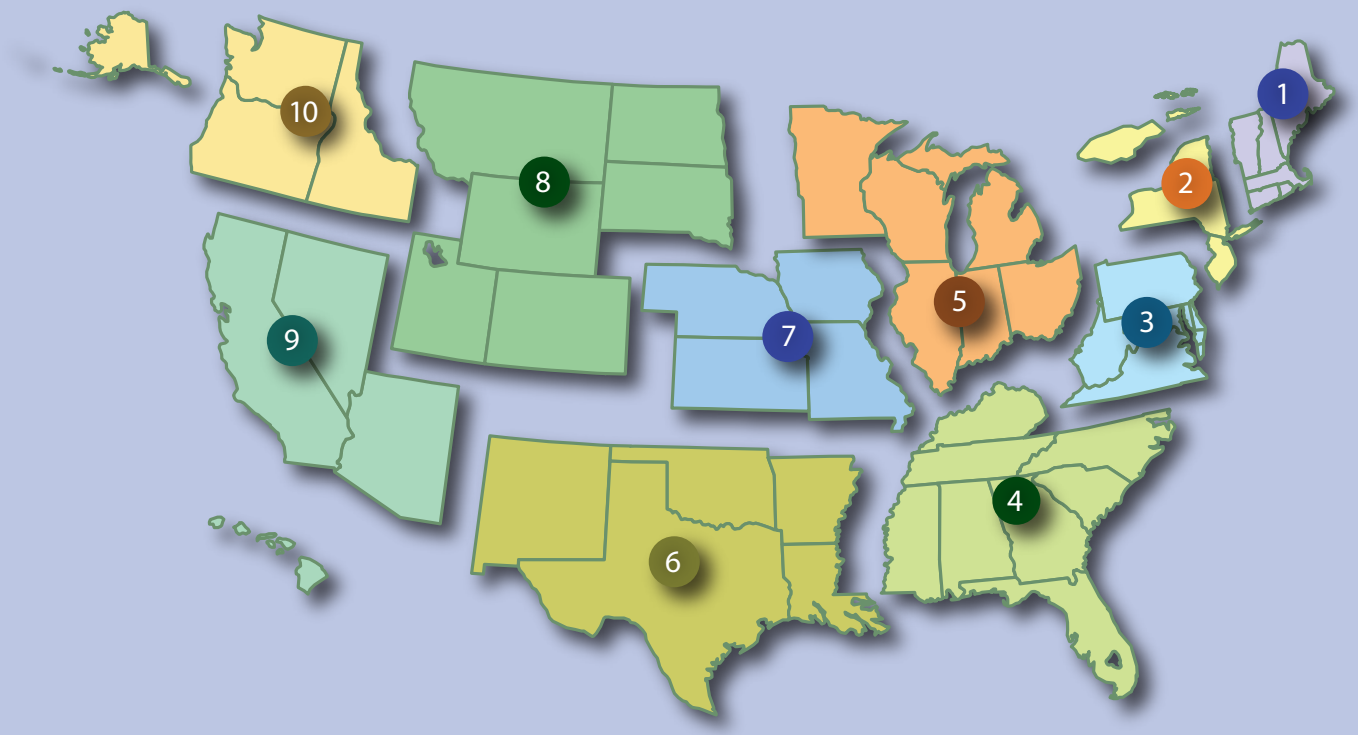
Coley Walker ~ Aiken, South Carolina

Chance meetings sometimes lead to unexpected opportunities. For Coley Walker, that day arrived in early 2009. One day while out walking, Walker was approached by two passersby in need of directions to a local meeting. As fortune would have it, the travelers were in town recruiting for EPA's first Savannah River Site Superfund Job Training Initiative (SRS SuperJTI). Walker attended that initial meeting and ended up passing the program's rigorous screening process and being selected as a trainee.

A 52-year-old man with a felony conviction, Walker had begun to think that many of life's doors had closed for him. SRS SuperJTI convinced him otherwise. "It allowed me to remove mental barriers," he said. "Instead of having tunnel vision, I started to ask, 'what can I do to help myself? What can I do to help others?' It's like a flower blossoming." Currently employed as a materials handler at the Savannah River Site, Walker described the SRS SuperJTI experience as "intense" and said the bond among his fellow trainees was infectious. "For the first time in my life, I actually have a job that I look forward to every day," he said. "At my age, the opportunity for a second chance is a blessing."

TASC Assistance Where You Live

For communities interested in more information or to request assistance, please contact the EPA Regional TASC representative in your area (see below) or visit the TASC website, at www.epa.gov/superfund/community/tasc.



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