

Mississippi Band of Choctaw develop Lead Program Strategy using GAP funds



Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians

Choctaw, Mississippi

Project Time Period (FY2015– FY2019)

- **Tribal Contact:** Jerry W. Cain, Environmental Director
- **GAP Project Officer:** Suzanne Armor, EPA Region 4
- **Media:** TSCA Section 404
- **GAP Funded Results:**
 - ETEP Development/Implementation
 - Outreach and Education
 - Program Development (Core Competencies)
 - TAS (or similar) application process
 - Training

Project Description

The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians leveraged FY2015 GAP funds to develop an EPA-Tribal Environmental Plan (ETEP) document, in which the tribe identified as a priority building capacity for a lead-based paint and asbestos program under Section 402 of the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA). In FY2018, EPA Region 4 granted the Tribe \$30,000 in TSCA funds to begin developing its TSCA program. The tribe's ultimate goal is to gain treatment in a manner similar to a state (TAS) to implement and enforce the program.

Project Details

Development of the tribe's ETEP was a collaborative effort between the MBCI Office of Environmental Protection (OEP), other tribal entities and EPA. Through the ETEP, the tribe identified priorities, reached agreement on shared priorities, and pinpointed action items and potential resources to further its priorities, particularly protection of tribal member's health, especially that of tribal youth.

Creating a Lead Program Strategy was a key element in obtaining an approvable work plan and grant funding. OEP identified legacy work products, which was a significant challenge. It also had to coordinate with tribal health organizations to define the initial scope of the effort and to formulate the necessary documentation. Limited staff and funding was also a barrier in undertaking new

tasks. The tribe collaborated with other tribal resources groups, such as The Institute of Tribal Environmental Professionals, to help in gathering information for developing the scope of the project. Another major obstacle was recovering decades-old historical information regarding past efforts that was only available in non-electronic formats.

Community Response

Completion of this phase of the project will result in a robust evaluation of the existing data and the formation of a comprehensive plan for a lead program that will lead to attainment of TAS from EPA. The main benefits from the program will be the capacity to train tribal staff in the evaluation of properties for potential lead exposure issues, education of potentially effected tribal populations, and detailed processes for other tribal entities to use to protect tribal youth.

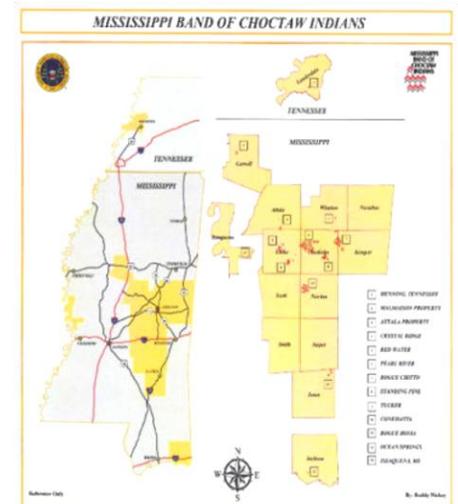
Innovation

Viewing the ETEP as a vehicle to not only set exotic priorities, but also as a strategic vision for the tribal environmental program was key. That vision involves moving from a project-based approach to developing sustainable programs that will result in clearly identifiable and measurable benefits to the health and environment of the tribe.

Next Steps

The tribe is focused on conducting a comprehensive review of existing data, isolating gaps in the data, and gathering

additional data necessary for the scope and design of the program. OEP will also be fostering partnerships with other tribal entities -- from health officials to facility maintenance groups -- to identify their needs and roles in the program. Ultimately, once the Lead Program Plan is developed and approved, additional sustainable resources will be obtained for implementation.



Map of Tribal Boundaries

The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians is a federally recognized tribe with approximately 35,000 acres of reservation land in 11 counties in Mississippi, as well as one community in Lauderdale County, Tennessee. The tribe claims land holdings in 14 different areas with eight official tribal communities. There are 10,700 enrolled members.

