
FOND DU LAC RESERVATION BUSINESS COMMITTEE



Project Title: Fond du Lac Emergency Response Development and Implementation
Award Amount: \$111,678
Type of Grant: Environment
Project Period: 9/30/2004 – 9/29/2006
Grantee Type: Tribe

PROJECT SUMMARY

- 1 job created
- 18 people trained
- 5 partnerships formed
- 12 elders involved

BACKGROUND

The Fond du Lac Reservation is in Minnesota and includes 100,000 acres along the western tip of Lake Superior. The Fond du Lac Band is one of the six Ojibwe bands that make up the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe. Much of the reservation is wetland. Approximately 3,728 people live within the reservation.

PROJECT PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

This Project was born out of the Tribe's need to comply with the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA). According to the Act, Tribes are required to document and inform the public of the nature of hazardous substances on or near reservation lands. Additionally, the Act requires that a comprehensive emergency plan be developed to protect the public in the event of a chemical disaster. This Project was very ambitious with complex objectives for each of its two years.

Five objectives were included in the Project for year one. The first three objectives for the first year required that a director be hired, the emergency response plan be revised to comply with federal mandates and Reservation Business Committee approve the emergency plan. These objectives were not completed due to problems retaining a director. A draft emergency response plan was completed. The third objective of the plan included developing and maintaining relationships with local municipalities and reviewing their emergency plans. Some very important relationships were formed, but nothing was finalized in writing and no emergency plans were reviewed. The fourth objective was to conduct a table-top exercise. Without a consistent person in the project director position, planning of this activity did not take place. The final objective for year one was to review information on toxic air that could impact the reservation. The Project director was not able to secure information on potential toxic inventories and impacts from industry representatives, again, due to the frequent turnover in this position. Alternative approaches to securing the information should have been pursued.

There were six objectives for year two. The first objective, keeping the Local Emergency

Planning Committee up to date through regularly scheduled committee meetings, was accomplished. Objective two was to strengthen relationships with local municipalities established in year one and develop new relationships. No new relationships were formed during the second year, however, the important contacts made in the beginning of the Project were maintained in year two. Objective three was to gather information and create a database that could be used to track information concerning chemical hazards moving through the reservation. This objective was not accomplished. The fourth objective, creating a table-top exercise for year two, was not accomplished. The fifth objective was to have signed Memoranda of Agreement with local agencies including fire departments and police for emergency response situations. These objectives were not completed. The final objective for the Project was to secure funding for an emergency response coordinator. The Tribe has agreed to fund the emergency response coordinator position when the grant is over.

The main challenge faced by this grant was keeping the Project director position staffed. Over the course of the two years, there were three different Project directors. This position required an in-depth knowledge of disaster training and environmental regulations that very few people in the local area had. As a result, Project outcomes fell short of initial expectations. There were no Memoranda of Agreement (MOA) or Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) documents signed with surrounding jurisdictions and there was no progress made in developing a system for identifying hazardous material shipments that cross reservation lands. Without official MOAs and MOUs, emergency response capabilities are limited. Without information on hazardous material shipments or transmittals across its boundaries (underground in the

case of pipeline transmission), the Tribe's ability to prepare for possible contamination/hazmat responses is severely hindered.

The work this Project aimed to do was monumental. Although many important activities were not accomplished, the community has benefited by the ground-work laid by this Project. The Project did result in the drafting of an emergency response plan for the Tribe.

PROJECT OUTCOMES AND IMPACT ON COMMUNITIES

This Project increased, and in some cases established, communication between different Tribal programs that are engaged in providing emergency response assistance and hazard mitigation. The Project increased communication between Tribal staff and staff from surrounding jurisdictions that are responsible for emergency response activities. This is important because the Tribe and local officials have not always agreed on how to handle situations that involve both collective parties. As a result of this Project, the Reservation Business Committee has agreed to fund the full time emergency response coordinator position in the future.

This Project has been well received by the people of the Fond du Lac Reservation. Individuals, especially elders, have had safety concerns and are anxious to see a comprehensive plan developed. Further, the school-aged children have been educated on the general emergency plan.

"All the kids and elders know where to go to be safe if something happens here."

Tribal Employee