

Funding the Superfund

Gabrielle Swaine

Majoring in Public Policy & Economics

Monday May 6, 2024

Introduction

The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Superfund program is responsible for cleaning up contaminated lands and responding to environmental emergencies.

- Cleaning up Superfund sites is a complex, multi-phase process, requiring immense funding
- Who pays for Superfund?



Historical Context

- 1980: Congress established Superfund under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA)
- CERCLA authorizes EPA to compel the responsible parties to clean up contaminated sites and seek reimbursement

Other Funding:

- CERCLA established a trust fund financed by taxes on crude oil and certain chemicals
 - Authority for taxes expired in 1995
- EPA receives annual appropriations from the trust fund for program activities




Policy Analysis

Official/Unofficial Actors:

- EPA & States
- **Polluters** (Current Owners/Operators, Past Owner/Operator, Arrangers, or Transporters)

Policy Concerns: EPA cleanup goals are unrealistic

- No current technology can clean these sites to government's standards
 - Tracking waste once it leaves a site is almost impossible
 - Major decisions are left to private companies
 - The cost of cleaning up hazardous sites is increasing
- 

Policy Sustainability & Options

Sustainability considerations:

- Environmental - program addresses environmental sustainability
- Economic - program has been depleted, inefficient sources of funding
- Equity - program addresses environmental justice issues

Policy Options:

1. Enhanced Funding and Resources
2. Public-Private Partnerships
3. Innovative Technologies and Remediation Methods
4. Policy Reform



My Policy Recommendation - Enhanced Funding and Resources

Social Implications

- Public Health and Safety
- Environmental Justice

Political Implications

- Government Priorities
- Legislative Action
- Regulatory Framework

Economic Implications

- Industry Responsibility
- Long-Term Cost Savings



Thank You! + Works Cited

- <https://www.epa.gov/superfund>
- <https://archives.huduser.gov/healthycommunities/indicator/18047.html>
- <https://publicintegrity.org/environment/epa-superfund-cleanup-costs-outstrip-funding/>
- <https://www.epa.gov/superfund/superfund-cleanup-process>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/mar/17/toxic-trail-weak-points-superfund-waste>
- <https://nepis.epa.gov>
- <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-08-841r>
- https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/comprehensive_environmental_response_compensation_and_liability_act_cercla
- <https://www.epa.gov/enforcement/recovering-costs-parties-bankruptcy>