



8 Stakeholder Perspectives

At MR sites throughout the United States, stakeholders' health, safety, interests, and livelihoods may be affected by the quality of an MR. These stakeholders include:

- owners of land or businesses located on former military facilities
- developers that plan to build on the property
- Native Americans on tribal lands formerly used for military purposes
- people who live, work, travel, worship, attend school, or enjoy recreational activities in these areas

Different stakeholders have differing perspectives regarding risk. Explosive risk in particular is understood more easily than toxic risk. While most stakeholders take a conservative, precautionary approach to explosive risk because of the potential immediate effects, some stakeholders, such as souvenir hunters, tend to minimize this risk. Other stakeholders show concern for UXO/DMM.

Stakeholder involvement efforts are critical and are more successful when the PDT engages the community early and often. Thus, it is essential that stakeholders understand that an MR project is designed to protect them. Stakeholders should be aware that the emphasis on quality and monitoring quality support the RAOs. The PDT should explain to stakeholders how lines of evidence, blind seeding, and the use of geophysical instruments help in determining the cleanup goals of the project and support the final conclusions. Consistent stakeholder engagement can alert the PDT to changes in stakeholder positions and potential land use changes, as well as foster a better working relationship with stakeholders that may have a role in the final approval of the project.

Involving stakeholders in decision making can support several project activities. Often, MR projects depend on various rights of entry. Consequently, for practical reasons, it is crucial that public and tribal stakeholders are informed and consulted about MR activities. By engaging stakeholders early in the process, right of entry efforts may go more smoothly. Without access agreements signed by private property owners or representatives of local agencies (depending on the specific site), an MR cannot be initiated. Additionally, where institutional controls are required to prevent contact with UXO/DMM—either before, during, or after the MR is conducted—public cooperation is key to implementing limitations on access and use. Finally, because most accidents involving UXO/DMM occur during movement of or tampering with UXO/DMM, stakeholders should be fully informed about and comfortable with the three R's of explosives safety: recognize, retreat, and report.

PDTs should provide public information that clearly explains the basic concepts and limitations of munitions detection equipment. Stakeholders living near MR sites are likely to have an overall understanding of the process; however, the details of the QC/QA procedures may not be fully grasped. It is important to convey to stakeholders that standardized and robust quality procedures are conducted throughout the life cycle of MR projects to protect the public and the environment. The PDT should make stakeholders aware that, even after an MR is complete, a very low probability still exists for encountering a munitions item. Incorporating a public awareness munitions safety program for any development that occurs on a former MR site is recommended.

Trust and engagement can sometimes be difficult for both sides, in part due to stakeholders' fear of the unknown risks and lack of trust in the process of finding and removing UXO/DMM. Opening a dialogue in a public setting, with relevant examples and explanations by the project manager, agency representative, and regulator, usually eases this tension. An effective speaker who can explain the process of blind seeding, how UXO/DMM is detected, and the process of recovering and disposal of UXO/DMM is an essential element of a Community Involvement Plan (USEPA 2016). This presentation is key to communicating risks and safeguards to stakeholders and building trust in the process.

8.1 Community Involvement Plan

The goal of a community involvement plan is to engage as many stakeholders as possible to ensure their involvement and awareness of the MR project objectives and activities, including the supporting quality system. In general, an effective CIP uses the following activities to inform the community and establish interest:

- Establish a website address and an information phone number.
- Use social media as outreach and updates. Create a Facebook account and Twitter accounts.
- Create both signage and flier notification, explaining the who, what, when, where, and why of the project.
- Be as descriptive and informational as possible.
- Use community leaders and organizations to communicate messages.
- Contact tribal councils to notify tribal stakeholders and be respectful of the practices and approaches that they use in communicating with their community.
- Engage the local American Indian Movement (AIM) chapter, if one is present. AIM chapters are usually well organized and are open to all tribes and tribal members. Outreach with this group can support communication with tribal stakeholders and leaders.
- Post fliers in the affected communities and ask local store fronts and businesses to place signage in their windows.
- Reach out to churches and synagogues, social groups such as the Elks Club, or any type of public forums where people congregate.
- Use census data to determine languages to be used to communicate the message.
- Contact local schools and talk to their administrative staff. Some schools use homework folders to communicate with parents. The school may be willing to place a meeting notification flier in these folders. Offer to meet with the parent/teacher association.
- Post notices at gas stations, truck stops, museums, and libraries.

Additionally, federal lands, including national forests, grasslands, parks and monuments, recreational areas, are places of national interest that may require outreach on a national level.

8.2 Using Public Service Announcements and the Media

Public service announcements and the media can be used to help improve the quality of public outreach effort:

- Check to see what media formats are available in the area. Reach out to local radio and television stations and ask them to broadcast a public service announcements for an public meetings about the cleanup site and process. Reach out to print media. Use college campus radio broadcasts, as well as the student union newsletter to reach area students.
- Host a media day meeting. If the project supports a public information officer, let this individual communicate directly with the media. Explain to media representatives how restoration advisory boards (RABs) and community involvement plans work. Give them an overview of the process involved. A media day can also serve as a dry run for a public meeting. Media interviews can be effective practice for engaging with stakeholders in a public meeting.

8.3 Maintain Updated Stakeholder Notification and Communications

Maintaining updated channels of communication keeps stakeholders engaged and contributes to the credibility of the outreach effort. For instance, social media sites must be kept up to date. Likewise, all signs posted about the site or about meetings should be checked and replaced as needed. The project manager, regulator, agency representative and public information officer should work together to update all materials that are presented to the public, at an RAB, or a community involvement plan meeting.

Back to Top ■ Next Section