9.0 Cross-Cutting Activities

Clean Car Campaign: Great Lakes United (GLU) completed mercury switch-out trainings in western New York with six major owners of vehicle fleets and participated with partners across the country in a "Switch the Switch" campaign with car dealerships. This work not only facilitated the removal of over 1,000 mercury switches from automobiles, but also raised general public awareness of this issue through the press coverage of these events. The mercury switch-out work was fostered by the *Toxics in Vehicles: Mercury* report, which GLU and Clean Car Campaign partners developed with the help of a GLBTS grant. The report was released in early 2001.

In partnership with other industry groups and environmental organizations, GLU developed an action plan to pursue a comprehensive solution to the problem of mercury in automobiles. Among other recommendations, the plan calls for: a manufacturer-sponsored collection and recovery program to capture mercury switches currently in commerce; manufacturers to commit to Design for Recycling to stop the introduction of new mercury into the end-of-life vehicle recycling infrastructure; and, for government entities to take a leadership role by implementing rules that require all future government fleet vehicles to be free of mercury.

The partnership is composed of the Automotive Recyclers Association, Clean Car Campaign, Clean Production Network, Great Lakes United, Ecology Center, Environmental Defense, Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries, Steel Manufacturers Association, and the Steel Recycling Institute.

Through 2002, GLU and its partners will continue to work with governments and the auto manufacturing sector on cost-effective ways to eliminate mercury from cars.

Innovative Approaches Concept: As an alternative to a substance-by-substance approach to GLBTS reductions, Environment Canada and USEPA presented an innovative approaches concept as a means of addressing multiple substances. This concept, which was discussed at the August 28, 2001 Integration Workgroup meeting, includes the application of innovative, cross-cutting pollutant management approaches or tools to help meet the goals of the GLBTS. Environmental Management Systems, Sustainable Product Development, Life Cycle Assessment, and Environmental Accounting are examples of these types of approaches.

Great Lakes Great Stove and Fireplace Change Out: From February through April 2001, the Hearth Products Association, in cooperation with environmental protection agencies, sponsored this program which helps protect the environment by offering incentives for people to change out old wood-burning appliances for cleaner burning appliances. The program also included educational events in St. Paul, Minnesota; Lansing, Michigan; and, Madison, Wisconsin; in which each state participated. While focusing on reductions of B(a)P, the program also triggered reductions in other air toxics, particulate matter (PM 2.5), and carbon monoxide.

Western Lake Superior Sanitary District Programs: It has been the goal of the Western Lake Superior Sanitary District (WLSSD) to create a total waste reduction program that is broadly applied to many areas of the organization. Activities and programs undertaken in the past year toward this goal include the following:

Organics Compost Site: In September 2001, WLSSD opened its food waste compost site, accepting food manufacturer waste and restaurant plate waste in order to reduce the volume of this kind of material from the waste stream and to create a high-quality compost product that can be put to beneficial use. It is the intention of the WLSSD to have this compost product, combined with the compost created from its existing yard waste compost site, available for public purchase by

Spring 2002.

Burn Barrel Use Reduction: Throughout the past two years, WLSSD has been working on a research project to identify the extent of open garbage burning in the region (specifically through the use of backyard burn barrels) and to create and launch a public education campaign to reduce and/or eliminate burning in the region. The research project's findings showed that 67.7 percent of respondents burn paper and junk mail. Although regional cities and towns have curbside paper recycling services readily available, rural recycling facilities funded by the District did not offer paper recycling. Recognizing that this lack of services may play a big part in rural residents disposal options—and, therefore, their tendency to burn, WLSSD launched a paper recycling pilot project at three rural recycling facilities. After testing proved to be workable, the WLSSD Board of Directors passed a resolution on October 1, 2001 to accept a new waste hauler contract that would haul paper recyclables from all rural recycling sheds.

In addition, at the end of October 2001, WLSSD will be making additional efforts to reduce the amount of junk mail that comes into the region. In its semi-annual newsletter, WLSSD will include articles and advice on how to "reduce the hail of unwanted mail". Phone numbers that consumers can call to be removed from mailing lists of credit card solicitation firms will be published, as well as a postcard that can be mailed to the national mail marketer's association requesting removal of a consumer's name from mailing lists.

Mercury-Free School Zone Project: In 2000, WLSSD partnered with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MCPA) to create and launch an outreach and education program to eliminate mercury from schools in the region. Staff at WLSSD and MPCA contacted over 100 schools in the seven-county region of northeast Minnesota, inviting them to pledge to become "Mercury-Free by 2003". Over 40 percent of the schools made the pledge, and over 130 pounds of elemental mercury and mercury-contaminated equipment was removed from the schools as of May 2001. Many more schools are anticipated to take part in this program this fall and throughout the new school year.

Electronics Recycling Event:: On August 24 and 25, 2001, WLSSD partnered with Best Buy Corporation, Waste Management, and a few local organizations to stage an Electronics Recycling Event. Electronics recycling opportunities are few in the region. Over the course of the two-day event, over 27 tons of electronics waste were collected from more than 550 participating residents.

"PVC-Free" Purchasing Policy: WLSSD has developed an internal policy to avoid the purchase of products that contain PVC and to use PVC alternatives whenever possible. With this policy in place, WLSSD has found cheaper and/or more durable products with the purchase of promotional magnets, non-vinyl signage, and table coverings. WLSSD has even found the best option for construction purposes to be PVC-free liners for digestion tanks for its new biosolids processing facility.

Mercury Reduction Projects: WLSSD has begun work on a Beneficiary Group for Environmental Improvement (St. Louis River/Interlake/Duluth Tar Superfund) program to reduce the amount of mercury amalgam in wastewater. Through a grant, approximately 30 advanced amalgam capture devices will be purchased and installed in dental practices within the District's service area. The 30 devices will cover approximately one-half of the dental practices within the District. These new amalgam capture devices trap fine amalgam particles much better than standard equipment and should result in a measurable reduction of mercury. The mass of mercury coming into WLSSD's wastewater treatment plant will be monitored to measure success—ultimately resulting in a report that documents the value of installing these devices.

In addition, through a grant by the Great Lakes Protection Fund, WLSSD completed the Great Lakes Dental Mercury Reduction Project. Through this program WLSSD brought together a collaboration of dental professionals, dental association staff, waste managers, and regulators to improve waste management practices in the dental profession. The group determined that the greatest need was to develop Best Management Practices and promote

amalgam recycling as a way to prevent amalgam from being disposed in ways in which it would reach the environment. *Recycling Amalgam Waste* was developed for reprinting and distribution by Great Lakes Dental Associations. All Great Lakes Dental Associations have reprinted the brochure and distributed it to their members as inserts in their dental journals or as a separate distribution. Approximately 50,000 copies of a simple instruction on how to best manage amalgam waste were distributed via the state dental associations. In many states this was the first mercury waste management educational effort for the dental profession.

Aguasabon River, Ontario
Photograph by Patrick T. Collins,
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources