

Comments for Melanie Oldham

TCEQ Commissioners' Agenda:

Item 9 - BASF Corporation Agreed Order

Good morning, Commissioners.

I am Melanie Oldham with Better Brazoria: Clean Air & Water. I live in Freeport, where the BASF facility is located, and I want to speak on the Supplemental Environmental Project selected.

Freeport is an environmental justice community that suffers disproportionately from air pollution caused by the fossil fuel industry. Some of the largest industrial polluters in the country are located here in Freeport. They emit pollutants including volatile organic compounds, or VOCs, and particulate matter that affect our health. We are also in nonattainment status for ozone pollution.

While Supplemental Environmental Projects are a meaningful way to help communities harmed by pollution receive some direct benefit from successful enforcement actions, the chosen SEP in Texas City is 48 miles away. SEPS are currently structured to allow polluters to fund projects in areas not directly affected by their environmental harm.

In order for a community member to be granted Affected Party Status, we have to demonstrate that we live within a mile or so radius of the facility. It's not faithful to the SEP program to assign a benefit to a community that did not suffer harm. The agency offers an easy remedy to this issue and that is the option for a custom SEP. It's a little lazy for any polluter not to engage with the local school districts here in Freeport or Brazosport to determine the potential to make a real impact in the *impacted community* instead.

I, along with the advocates at Public Citizen, believe the SEP program is a good thing and that communities could really benefit from the fundamental concept. We welcome the opportunity to start a dialog with BASF and the school district on a custom SEP and appreciate that they've made use of this program. But the agency should also make it a priority to find ways to encourage polluters to put those funds directly into the communities they're harming.

Thank you.