



A Sematech worker examines equipment used to reprocess hydrofluoric acid as a part of the consortium's efforts to recycle materials. Environmental and community activists met with Sematech officials Tuesday and requested more environmental measures.

Activists press for role at Sematech

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Environmental and community activists are pressing for a greater say in how Sematech conducts research on making microchips more cleanly.

Activists on Tuesday described their meetings with Sematech officials this week as "a good first step" but insisted that the Austin-based research consortium take further steps to demonstrate its willingness to work with them.

Sematech, they said, should provide more detailed information on its environmental proposals and spending.

In addition, they said, it should grant

Groups want a say in environmental, community issues

them one or more seats on its board of directors and should form national and community advisory panels in which grassroots environmental and community groups would be included.

Among those organizations meeting with Sematech were the Campaign for Responsible Technology and the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice.

Activists said they want the consortium to take a broad look at both environmental and community issues.

"Environmental impact is not just the reduction or the elimination of chemicals," said Susana Almanza, co-chairwoman of the Austin group People Organized in Defense of Earth and Its Resources, which is part of the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice. "We want to have the vision broadened to include the people and the economic impact to the worker and the community."

This week's meetings were part of a process mandated by Congress last year in allocating federal funds to the chi-

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manufacturing consortium.

Congress mandated that 10 percent of the \$100 million in federal funds for Sematech be devoted to environmental research. In addition, Congress directed that Sematech consult with appropriate environmental and labor groups on those programs.

Officials of the consortium said they came away from the meetings encouraged that areas of common interest emerged between the environmental groups and Sematech's member companies.

Frank Squires, the consortium's chief administrative officer, said, "There are some areas where we have a large degree of overlap and where we can work together." Sematech also will work on environmental health and safety issues, community involvement and improved education, he added.

But Squires cautioned that some requests lay outside the consortium's authority. Sematech, he said, will not be involved in placing requirements on or monitoring the activities of its member companies.

Squires said it is too early to say how Sematech will respond to requests for placing environmentalists on its board of directors and creating.

The environmentalists presented their own agenda for Sematech: studying the total environmental burden in producing semiconductors; substituting chemicals called glycol ethers in chip production; substituting toxic gases; substituting ozone-depleting chemicals; recycling and reusing materials; and studying new "additive" production methods that minimize the generation of scrap materials.

A Sematech spokesman noted that Sematech already is working at replacing some toxics, including arsenic and silane gas; already does considerable work on recycling acids and other materials; and has eliminated the use of all "class A" ozone-depleting materials.

Environmentalists noted several areas of agreement but expressed some disappointment that Sematech was reluctant to provide specifics on some of its environmental research areas.

"The devil is really in the details," said Ted Smith of the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition.

Squires said he is optimistic Sematech can supply environmentalists with enough detailed information to demonstrate the consortium's level of effort devoted to environmental research without revealing sensitive information to Japanese competitors.