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... was completed on July 24, 1996.

EPA Project Alarms Environmentalists

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
limits are less stringent than those currently enforced.
The EPA—signed by Intel, local and federal government agencies and four individuals, or “stakeholders,” which were selected by Intel to represent the Chandler/Phoenix community-at-large—sets obligations and ceilings on air pollution, water re-use and toxic and solid waste disposal at the brand-new microprocessor plant. Performance reviews are to be held quarterly with an advisory panel and semi-annually with the public and on the Internet.
“The idea of Project XL is to try to move the EPA back into the business of what it was originally founded for, which is to make the environment better and to minimize the impact humanity will have on the environment. It’s an attempt to move away from the regulatory battle and make things performance-related,” said an Intel spokesman.

Under current regulations, moving a piece of installed wafer processing equipment requires a re-permitting process, which can take several months.
“What we get is flexibility, and the ability to run our business as efficiently and effectively as possible, as long as we stay under the limits,” the spokesman said.
But some environmental

groups say the government is favoring big business over the health and safety of the community. Calling the plan “Project eXtra Lientent,” the Campaign for Responsible Technology (CRT) said the agreement would deregulate some pollutants that are currently regulated.

Ted Smith of San Jose, Calif.-based CRT said the idea behind Project XL is a good one, but “it needs to be combined with better tools...so that in the name of streamlining, they’re not just doing deregulation.”
The plan that was signed last week does not provide for independent monitoring, did not have adequate community involvement, nor is it enforceable, Mr. Smith said.
“It’s the first agreement of its kind in the country, and with a company the size of Intel, it has the potential to be precedent-setting. Our concern is, now that Intel has it, everyone else is going to demand it. Arizona and New Mexico have far weaker environmental standards than we do in California. We fear they will bring downward pressure on our efforts and trigger a race to the bottom,” said Mr. Smith, who heads another environmental group, the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition.

However, Intel contends the agreement makes it possible to achieve lower pollution levels than would have been possible under the regular permitting process.
The EPA agrees. “We’ve already heard from other electronics companies that Intel has raised the bar for what will be expected,” said Jeff Rosenbloom, director of Project XL. “If other folks want to do this, they may have to meet Intel’s performance levels.”
But other semiconductor companies may not have to wait five years for Intel’s experiment to conclude.
“I don’t want to wait five years,” Mr. Rosenbloom said. “I think we might be able to get good feedback within a year or so.”
There are 40 proposed Project XL programs across the country, 15 of which are in active negotiations, Mr. Rosenbloom said. Intel’s is the second EPA signed; the first was with a juice company.
The agreement covers Fab 12’s existing 150,000-square-foot clean room and allows for Intel to double the size of the site, as long as emissions-per-production unit remain under a set cap. To quell concerns for public safety, Intel also agreed to maintain a 1,000-foot setback from the edge of the lot. Fab 12 was chosen because it is a state-of-the-art, volume production facility, rather than a prototyping factory, which would be more difficult to monitor, according to Intel. ♦

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