



November-December 2022 Superfund Update

Activities in the last month

Consent Decree Principles meeting on project schedules

Chief executive J.P. Gallagher requested a meeting last month to discuss project schedules for work that will be done under the Consent Decree (CD). The meeting included all parties to the CD including Atlantic Richfield, agencies, and Butte Silver Bow. The CD lays out the agreement for the future remediation of land and waters within the Butte Priority Soils Operable Unit. The goal of the meeting was to come up with a plan to better address public expectations about the schedule for project construction and Superfund delisting.

A common concern expressed by the remedy design team, EPA, and DEQ has been the ability to meet the eight year construction schedule in the CD which has construction completed by end of 2027. The current estimate for these projects schedules is to be completed by 2031. There is also concern about meeting public expectations about statements made by EPA's Regional Administrator Doug Benevento during his 2018 visit to Butte when he said that Superfund delisting could begin in 2024 (link to January 26, 2018 Montana Standard article:

https://mtstandard.com/news/local/epa-butte-hill-cleanup-agreement-reached/article_798fec1c-1635-5b00-8c83-2c01fb64e058.html

It turns out the 2024 date was never realistic because the CD was not signed until 2020 and given the complexity of the design and construction process that is now underway. What is clear today about the schedule is that Atlantic Richfield, BSB, EPA, CTEC, and DEQ are hard at work on getting this work done in an efficient manner, and more importantly, getting it done right under the intent of the 2020 Consent Decree to protect human health and the environment. Atlantic Richfield plans to communicate to the public on the likely schedule for construction work and potential Superfund delisting in the near future.

Residential Metals Abatement Program blood lead testing

Blood lead screening is available to the public again through Butte-Silver Bow's Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program. Screening was halted for two years nationally due the COVID-19 pandemic. Blood lead testing is free through the Butte-Silver Bow Health Department. Blood lead screening is important to understanding if children are exposed to lead at levels of concern. Blood lead screening also provides the main data for the Medical Monitoring Studies that are produced every five years and which track public health as it relates to Superfund contaminants. The next Medical Monitoring Study will begin soon and be completed by 2025.

Information on blood lead screening is available from the RMAP Program at 406-497-5040 or the WIC Program at 406-497-5060. Additionally, Butte-Silver Bow has hired a new Environmental Health Nurse, Kayla Harvey (406-497-5003, kharvey@bsb.mt.gov) where blood lead testing is available to all.

Waste caps – Butte Reclamation Evaluation System (BRES)

BRES is the monitoring program to determine if caps needs additional maintenance or redesign. Mining waste caps are monitored and evaluated every four years by Butte-Silver Bow's Department of Reclamation & Environmental Services. Clark Fork Watershed Education Program (CFWEP) assists Butte-Silver Bow and performs the majority of cap evaluation field work. Weeds, barren areas, erosion gullies, and public dumping of yard waste and other trash are some of the issues that the program fixes. Some ongoing problems with waste caps date back prior to 2012 when EPA issued a Unilateral Administrative Order to ensure that BRES be followed.

This year, Butte-Silver Bow released BRES reports for monitoring done in 2021 at fifty capped sites located in Walkerville, McGlone Heights, and Centerville. Waste caps that need to be fixed have plans developed for them. If the cap has a history of problems, then it is evaluated for design changes to the cap and/or vegetation. Expert advice for those plans is provided by a Technical Working Group which includes restoration ecologists, biologists, and reclamation specialists. Dr. Robert Pal, Montana Tech Restoration Ecologist is part of that team. Weeds have proven difficult to control and Atlantic Richfield and Butte-Silver Bow are looking into new approaches for combatting weeds. In general, older problems with caps are now being addressed through these plans and through the Insufficiently Reclaimed site process established in the Consent Decree.

Montana Pole and Treating Plant – waste repository

Last summer the waste repository was constructed to permanently store contaminated soil at the former Montana Pole wood timber treatment plant. The repository is referred to as a corrective action management unit (CAMU) in Superfund lingo. The repository will hold the soils which contain residual pentachlorophenol (a wood treating preservative) and dioxin (a by-product of pentachlorophenol). The repository prevents exposure to contaminants and prevents leaching of the chemicals to groundwater. The repository will be fenced for protection of the cap, and will not be part of the site that will be available for future redevelopment. DEQ is working now to determine which portions of the site will be available for redevelopment, should Butte-Silver Bow or a developer have interest.

Maps and additional info on the Montana Pole cleanup are available from DEQ's site dashboard at this link:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/6c05f644ef0c4c21bce16cf6b581c30f>

The photos below show installation of the liner over the repository, and grading of soil on the cap during July and August. The soil on the cap will have grass seeded in 2023. (Photos courtesy of DEQ)





Upcoming Activity Schedule

The following upcoming Superfund design and remedy activities are planned in the near future.

December 9: the Grove Gulch sedimentation bay 95% design will be released by Atlantic Richfield.

December 16: the Buffalo Gulch storm basin 60% design will be released by Atlantic Richfield.

CTEC plans to comment on both of these remedy designs.