



CTEC



July & August 2024 Superfund Update

Current Activities

Stormwater Project Construction Begins

In early August Atlantic Richfield began construction of the Grove Gulch project adjacent to Lexington Ave south of I-90. This is the first of the Butte Priority Soils Consent Decree stormwater projects to begin. It includes removal of a minor amount of mining waste from the floodplain and construction of a stormwater basin to treat mining metal contaminants in Grove Gulch prior to where the creek flows into Blacktail Creek. Design of this project was formally underway in 2020, shortly after the Consent Decree was signed and lodged with the U.S. District Court. Atlantic Richfield hopes to pour concrete before the weather turns this fall with remaining work and vegetation planting to be done next spring.

Butte Treatment Lagoon Stress Test Called Off

Butte's groundwater is widely impacted by historic mining. For over a decade, groundwater has been captured and treated at the Butte Treatment Lagoons (BTL) before it is discharged to Silver Bow Creek. In the coming years additional contaminated groundwater will be captured by new groundwater capture systems to be built under the Consent Decree and during project excavation pumping if upcoming waste removal projects do not slurry the waste to the Berkeley Pit.

The Butte Treatment Lagoons treat contaminated groundwater and discharge clean water to Silver Bow Creek.



Atlantic Richfield had planned for several years to conduct a “stress test” of the lagoon treatment to help assess the capability for treating increase future flows. Atlantic Richfield issued an official Work Plan in June seeking expedited EPA approval for the stress test. The plan was for test set up and pre-test monitoring to begin in June with the actual test underway on August 23rd. CTEC commented on that proposal, telling EPA among other things that the stress test was a good idea, but the opportunity also provided a golden opportunity to collect important data for the Blacktail Creek and

Butte Reduction Works groundwater capture systems that will be built under the Consent Decree. EPA issued similar comment to Atlantic Richfield in late July. Ultimately, the stress test never came to be. Atlantic Richfield has said that this is the last year they would conduct the stress test because the coming years have packed schedules constructing the remaining Consent Decree projects. They also said the stress test is not a requirement of the Consent Decree so there is nothing compelling it to occur. It remains to be seen whether additional aquifer pumping tests will be done to inform design of the Blacktail Creek and Butte Reduction Works groundwater capture systems.

Streamside Tailings Update

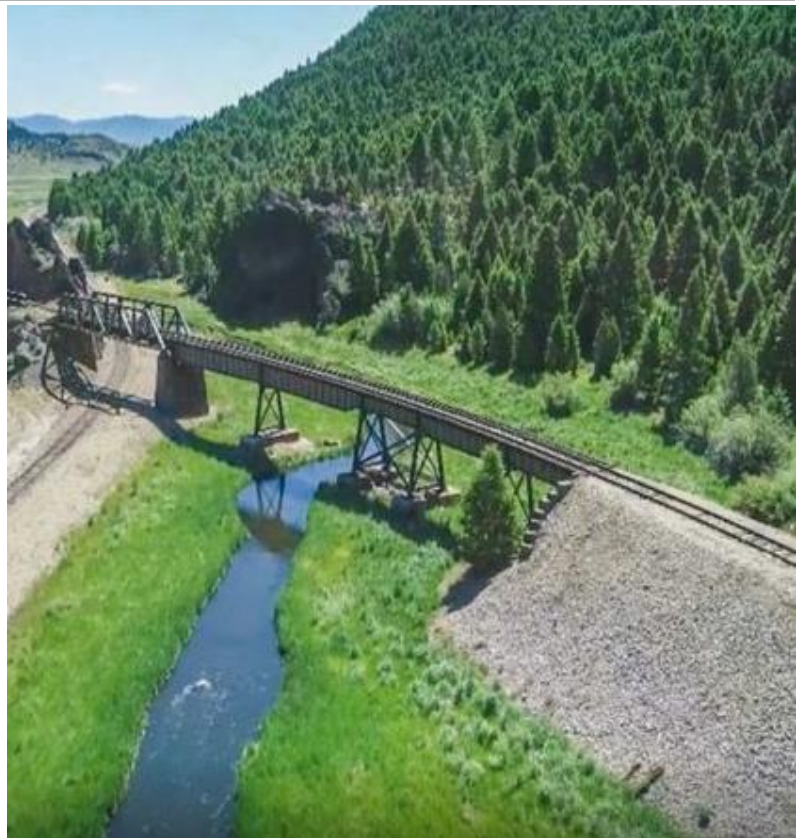
Streamside Tailings Operable Unit is the portion of the Superfund site following Silver Bow Creek for 23 miles from near the I-90 overpass in Butte down to the Warm Springs Ponds. Led by Montana DEQ, the creek corridor was extensively cleaned up from 2019 to 2015, with excavation of mining tailings from the floodplain, reconstruction of the stream and floodplain, and revegetation. The project has been a big success as native fish and wildlife habitat has been restored and water quality greatly improved. Since 2015 DEQ has been addressing portions of the project that are not meeting Record of Decision standards.

Copper exceeds aquatic life standards in a relatively small portion of monitoring samples and groundwater remains contaminated with metals and arsenic. DEQ has plans to begin a focused investigation of groundwater contamination entering the creek near the railroad switching yard in Rocker. The switching yard may be built on top of mining waste, or an ore concentrate spill.

Streambed sediment continues to show contamination with one main source being upstream in Butte. This shows the importance of constructing the Butte Priority Soils Consent Decree stormwater projects for protecting the entire Silver Bow Creek. As noted above, the first of those projects, Grove Gulch, is being constructed now with additional stormwater ponds to be constructed in the next several years.

CTEC has invited DEQ to attend our September 19th meeting to present on the Streamside Tailings.

Remediated and restored section of Streamside Tailings (DEQ photo)



Publicly Observable Superfund Remedy Design Meetings

September 24 9:00-11:00 AM: BPSOU Consent Decree Remedial Design/Remedial Action Progress Meeting

September 10 9:00-10:00 AM: RMAP progress meeting

Publicly observable meetings can be accessed by signing up for EPA's Butte Superfund email newsletter by emailing Community Involvement Coordinator Katherine Jenkins at jenkins.katherine@epa.gov or from a link at EPA's website <https://cumulis.epa.gov/supercpad/cursites/csitinfo.cfm?id=0800416>.

Upcoming Remedy Design Schedule

The Blacktail Creek Hydraulic Control 30% design and Sitewide Groundwater Model updates are expected mid-September.

The Buffalo Gulch 95% design and the Diggings East 95% design are expected to be done in November.