



March 2024 Superfund Update

Current Activities

Consent Decree Project Technical Meetings to Resume

Last month we reported that monthly technical and progress meetings for Consent Decree Projects had been on hiatus since early December. These projects include the Butte Reduction Works, Grove Gulch, Buffalo Gulch, Diggings East, Northside Tailings, Blacktail Creek, and additional groundwater control projects. The map below shows where the projects are located.

Since then, the meeting schedule has resumed with the next meeting Tuesday March 26th at 9 AM. Atlantic Richfield also released the Grove Gulch 100% Design on March 25th. This is the first of the Consent Decree projects to reach design completion and CTEC plans to review this final design release. EPA still must approve of the final design, with concurrence from Montana DEQ.

Map showing Consent Decree project areas (from Atlantic Richfield Upper Silver Bow Creek Master Plan)



Improvements Proposed for Mining Waste Caps

Butte Reclamation Evaluation System (BRES) is the monitoring program that is used to determine if mining waste caps continue to meet standards or need additional reclamation or maintenance. Caps are monitored and evaluated by Butte-Silver Bow's Department of Reclamation & Environmental Services each summer on a cycle that monitors every site once every four years. Weeds, barren areas, erosion gullies, and public dumping of yard waste and other trash are

some of the issues that the program fixes. 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.

Caps are intended to have a diverse plant community including native species that help the cap to withstand erosion and promote cap stability. Weeds have proven difficult to control. Monitoring done over the last several years has shown that weed conditions are not improving and may be impairing cap stability. EPA recently requested that Butte-Silver Bow and Atlantic Richfield prepare a weed control plan that includes a strategy for weed control improvement and additional monitoring and reporting to ensure goals are met.

The cap monitoring field data is also used to calculate a score for each BRES site. Sites that score poorly on vegetation and erosion issues are required to have a Reclamation Improvement plan to bring the cap up to standard. EPA has also requested that BRES sites which need Reclamation Improvement plans be subject to the more detailed sampling and assessment that is currently done under Consent Decree reclamation standards. This should help to improve long-term issues that are affecting some of the older reclaimed areas.

Upcoming Remedy Design Schedule

Atlantic Richfield has the following Remedy Design documents scheduled this year:

The revised Butte Reduction Works Pre-Design Investigation Evaluation Report is planned for June 2024. The Butte Reduction Works 60% Design is planned for October 2024.

The Diggings East 60% Design is planned for April and the Buffalo Gulch 95% Design is planned for July.