



### **Columbia Falls Aluminum Company Community Liaison Panel**

#### **Minutes**

**February 11, 2021**

**Microsoft Teams Platform**

**6 p.m.**

**CLP Members Attending:** Turner Askew, Don Bennett, Chad Campbell (Sen. Jon Tester), Ron Catlett (Senator Steve Daines), Jessy Coltrane, Dan Jessop (Rep. Matt Rosendale), Jerry Merkatz, Lyle Mitchell, Susan Nicosia, Stacey Schnebel, Erin Sexton, Bev York.

**CLP Members Absent:** Mayor Don Barnhart, Nino Berube, Dee Brown (OOT), Rep. Braxton Mitchell (Session), Phil Mitchell (OOT), Ray Negron, Joe Russell, Anna Stene, Shannon Stringer, Clarence Taber, Chief Karl Weeks, Smith Works,

**Community At-Large:** Jami Belt, Tab Graves, Lori/John Woods,

**CFAC Representatives:** Cheryl Driscoll, John Stroiazzo and Steve Wright, CFAC; Drew Baris and Laura Jensen, Roux Associates; Luke Carlson, Morrison-Maierle.

**Agency Representatives:** Beth Archer, Ken Champagne, Mike Cirian, Ken Champagne, Vernalka, Joe USEPA; Dick Sloan, Kevin Stone, MDEQ.

**Media:** Chris Peterson, *Hungry Horse*; Kianna Gardner, *Daily Interlake*.

**Facilitator:** Mary A. Green, Mary Ann Green Communications, LLC

**Minutes:** Mary A. Green.

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The regular meeting of the Columbia Falls Aluminum Company Community Liaison Panel (CLP) was Thursday, February 11, 2021. Mary Green facilitated and began the meeting at 6:05 p.m. Because of COVID-19, the meeting was conducted virtually by using Microsoft Teams.

The agenda was distributed prior to the start of the meeting.

## **Project Update**

### Communications Update

Mary explained she has received no community emails, phone calls or text about the project. The most recent project updated, distributed in December 2020 was mailed directly to 644 households in the community. Invitations to the panel meeting were mailed to the panel, the same number of community households and placed in the local newspaper.

Beth Archer said the EPA has had no inquiries. Although she said she has not met the community, she has been to the site. She also introduced Kevin Stone, who is the public information officer for the Montana DEQ.

## **Project Updates**

### Overall Project

John Stroiazzo shared photos of the site pre- and post-demolition. The final demolition efforts removed the silos. Remaining now are the administration building, the main warehouse and a couple of other useable buildings. John said his understanding is BPA is planning to remove electrical station.

John referenced the EPA stepping-stone diagram, shown during the discussion, and explained the project is in the Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RI/FS) stage. The RI portion includes sampling of soil, groundwater and surface water. The FS, now underway, looks at remedial options and evaluates them to identify remedial options. The draft FS report has been submitted to the agencies for review. John said this step is critical because it determines the path forward.

John said even with the pandemic, the project has remained on-schedule and is moving along well. He noted the early action work at the South Percolation Pond has been progressing.

### South Percolation Pond

Luke began by explaining the operations and facilities at the site were located on a bluff more than 100 feet above and north of the Flathead River. The south percolation ponds were constructed by former owner ACRO in the 1960s. Using a presentation, Luke walked the panel through the work related to the South Percolation Pond area and is an early action.

The EPA approved an Administrative Order on Consent for Removal Actions for the south ponds area in July 2020. The work was divided into two phases:

- Phase 1, completed in winter 2020, consisted of removal of the impacted sediment layers from the south ponds and hauling the sediments to an approved repository on the north end of the site. This work prepared the area to return to a natural floodplain environment free of man-made and river control features.
- Phase 2, removal of the sheet pile wall, riprap bank stabilization, and the remaining access road berm across the south ponds, will return the area to a natural floodplain setting. Additionally, the natural processes of the Flathead River will return to its natural channel. Phase 2 design is completed and approved by the agencies. Construction is to begin in the coming weeks. All instream work is planned to be completed by mid-March and final project tasks to revegetate ground above normal water elevations are planned for completion by mid-April 2021, before spring runoff of the Flathead River.

### **Feasibility Study Draft Report**

Laura Jensen presented the information by working through a presentation. She began by showing a slide of the site and the sampling locations used during the RI process. The RI was conducted between 2016 and 2018. Laura said data from multiple rounds under varying conditions were collected, specifically:

- More than 1,000 soil samples
- 400 groundwater samples from 77 wells
- 200 surface water samples
- 70 sediment samples
- 40 porewater samples
- 100 offsite samples

The investigative portion of the work concluded there is no risk to human health or the environment offsite; however, theoretical risk does appear onsite. Laura explained the work identifies this to be caused by the west landfill and the wet scrubber sludge pond. Cyanide, fluoride and PAHs are the drivers.

Laura reviewed the process of evaluating the alternatives during the Feasibility Study process. The draft FS report was submitted to the agencies in October 2020.

Laura explained the process identified relative advantages and disadvantages of each remedial action alternative relative to one another. It utilized a numerical scoring system. In general, the higher the relative score, the better that alternative satisfies the respective criteria when compared to the other alternatives for that decision unit.

Laura reviewed the highest-ranking alternatives; however, she explained it is preliminary and under EPA/MDEQ review and subject to change. No alternative shared had been selected as

the remedy for the site. The alternatives listed were the highest ranking against CERCLA criteria, based on analysis in the draft FS Report.

### **EPA Update**

Joe Vranka, Superfund Branch Chief for Region, explained there has been no selection of remedy for the site. He said when the feasibility study is finalized, the agency will begin to prepare a Record of Decision (ROD). That document outlines the agency's decision regarding the path forward for remediation. Once finalized, the ROD is made public for a 30-day period. All input is reviewed and taken into account.

Ken Champagne, who joined agency's project team in April 2020 said the EPA and MDEQ have been collaborating and will continue through the review process of the draft FS. He noted the agency extended the AOO deadline and will need to continue that until the technical contractor is on board. Once that occurs, the FS report will be finalized, and the ROD will be issued. That timeline is 8-12 months away. Once the ROD is issued, the public comment period will begin. The community will be notified of that, as well, he explained.

Mike Cirian announced that after 30 years, he is retiring from the agency in March. He said the CFAC project was the first project that began under his management, unlike others that he assumed responsibility for after the process began. He expressed his appreciation and said he has enjoyed the team. Mike said he will be remaining in the area. Mike then announced that Ken will become the agency's project manager.

Cheryl Driscoll said she has worked on the project for six years. She thanked Mike for his leadership. Cheryl said Glencore takes pride in the project and the collaborative approach that has evolved. She also thanked the panel for being involved in the process. She said the group helped the team get to this point in the process. She finished by saying she looks forward to working with Ken as the project manager going forward.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Mary reminded the media project that representatives will remain on the platform to answer questions. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

**NEXT MEETING DATE:                    To Be Determined**