



Summary of Project History and Superfund Process

As many of our neighbors are aware, Columbia Falls Aluminum Company (CFAC) has been conducting comprehensive studies to assess conditions at its former aluminum smelting plant and reviewing alternatives to remediate the site since 2015. This work has been conducted under the supervision of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) with input from the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ).

The Superfund process required CFAC to follow specific guidelines to assess the site and evaluate alternatives, all of which have now been completed. The process began when CFAC conducted a Remedial Investigation to assess site conditions. EPA approved the report in February 2020. A Feasibility Study to evaluate the remedial alternatives for the site was approved by EPA in June 2021. The final clean-up method will be determined by EPA after a comprehensive review of public comments on the preliminary plan and site information.

CFAC's top priority throughout this process has been to ensure the short- and long-term protection of human health and the environment. CFAC conducted more than 1,500 samples on site and 100 offsite samples, none of which showed any materials from the site migrating to Aluminum City or the main stem of the Flathead River.

The Remedial Investigation included a comprehensive evaluation of soils, river sediments and ground and surface water. The process determined chemicals are present at levels in groundwater and soil onsite that have the potential to pose a risk if left unaddressed.

The Remedial Investigation assessed site conditions and supported the development and evaluation of remediation alternatives in the Feasibility Study. The Feasibility Study examined multiple alternatives to achieve legally required groundwater and soil quality standards, and used an established evaluation method to score the alternatives. Using this EPA-approved approach, the Feasibility Study scored alternatives for all of the areas that require remediation. The highest scoring alternative for addressing some of the legacy landfills included improving landfill caps and installing a slurry wall, which will isolate the impacted material from groundwater. The highest scoring alternative for impacted site soils was to excavate them and place them in an approved on-site location. The highest scoring alternatives for the other site legacy landfills was to improve landfill caps.

On June 1, 2023, EPA issued its proposed plan for cleanup of the CFAC site. The plan defines EPA's preferred cleanup option, which combined the highest scoring alternatives in the Feasibility Study mentioned above. EPA's plan provides an overview of the rationale for how the preferred alternative was chosen.

Schedule Update and Next Steps

When EPA released its proposed plan on June 1, 2023, it began a 60-day public comment period, which is open to all members of the public. The comment period is scheduled to close on July 31, 2023.

EPA will give a presentation about details of the proposed plan at a public meeting. The meeting is scheduled for June 28, 2023, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the Columbia Falls Town Hall (130 6th Street West) in the Council Chamber room.

Interested members can submit comments in writing (by mail, email, or at the public meeting). Written comments can be sent to Missy Haniewicz U.S. EPA, 1595 Wynkoop Street, Denver, CO 80202, or you may send them via email to haniewicz.melissa.m@epa.gov.

Following the comment period, EPA will consider those comments when developing its Record of Decision (RoD), which will contain the final site remedy plan.

Information About the Preferred Alternative

As mentioned above, EPA's preferred alternative is a comprehensive site-wide remedy that proposes remedial measures to address all of the areas of the site that require additional assessment and remediation.

The preferred alternative proposes to excavate impacted soils and place them in an on-site disposal area. Likewise, it proposes to excavate impacted sediment from upland percolation ponds and place it in the same on-site disposal area. Landfills not impacting groundwater would be recapped.

The preferred alternative for addressing the legacy landfills impacting groundwater includes a combination of improving landfill caps and installing a slurry wall, which will isolate the impacted material from groundwater.

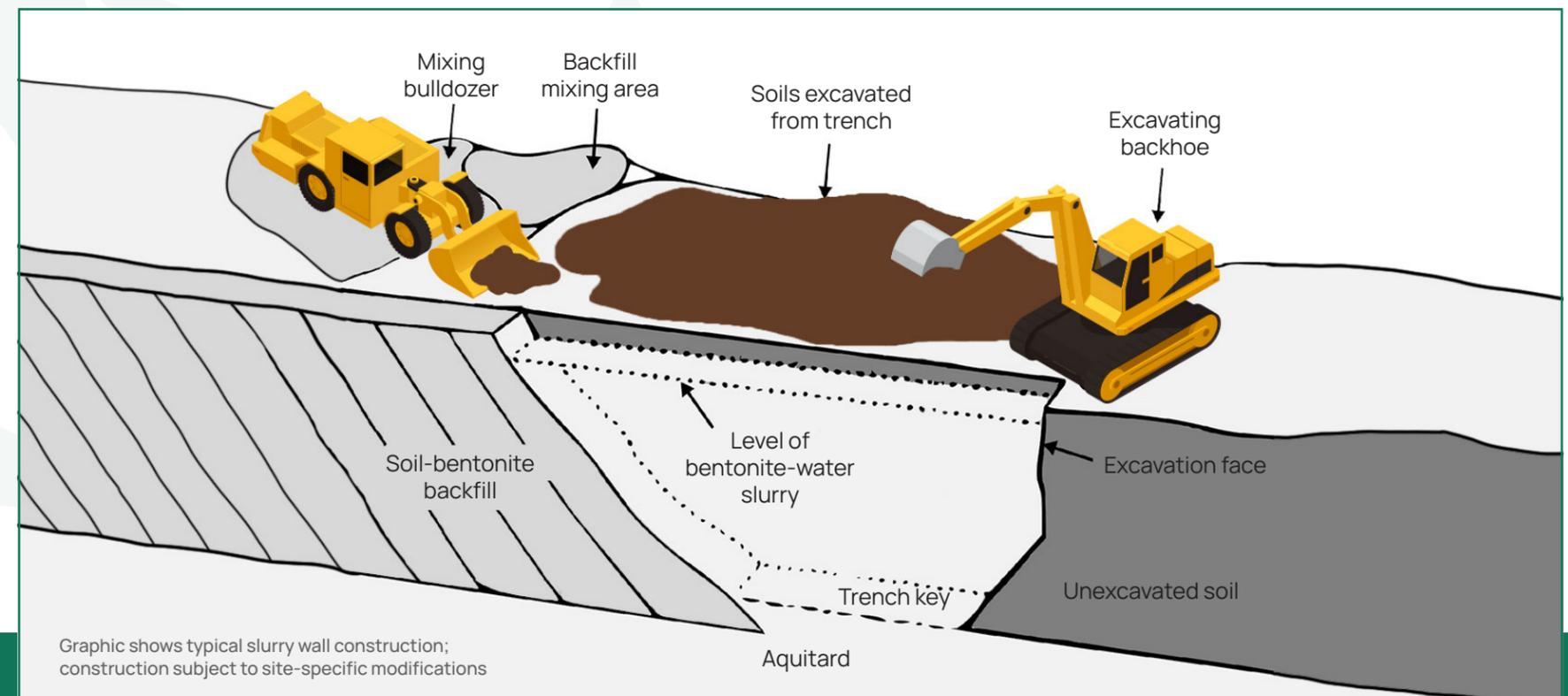
Slurry walls are subsurface barriers that impede or stop groundwater flow and are a proven and effective remediation solution, which have been successfully deployed across the country, including at many EPA Superfund sites. The slurry wall would be designed to encompass the legacy landfills' source area and prevent impacts to groundwater.

Regardless which alternative is selected, the Superfund process requires EPA to monitor the effectiveness of the chosen alternative into the future. Among other things, there will be a series of groundwater wells to monitor water quality, and data will be collected, analyzed and stored carefully. If additional work is required, it will be performed.

Site Reuse Update

The Superfund site encompasses approximately 1,300 acres, most of which were used during the operating period. CFAC is remediating this area for the purpose of future industrial or commercial use. Since May 2022, CFAC has rented an onsite warehouse to an aircraft support services company.

In 2020, CFAC entered into an agreement to sell 772 acres of land (south of the river, and outside the Superfund site boundary) to the Flathead Land Trust and the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission (FWP). The sale was completed in December 2021 and the property is open to the public and managed by FWP.



Additional Project Details

To learn more about this project or review cleanup alternative rankings in detail, visit the project website at > [CFACproject.com](https://www.cfacproject.com)

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