CFAC

# Fall 2025 Newsletter

As summer and fall activities are wrapping up, we are pleased to share the latest updates of ongoing activities for the Columbia Falls Aluminum Company (CFAC) Superfund remediation project. This newsletter provides an overview of current activities and next steps in the remediation work. We are committed to transparency and keeping our community informed as we move forward together.

Technician conducts pore water sampling in the ground beneath the stream bed of the Flathead River.

## Unilateral Order

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) issued a Unilateral Administrative Order (UAO) to allow pre-design field work to move forward while the consent decree is being finalized. This step allows important preliminary work to be completed during favorable weather conditions, avoiding additional delays.

The UAO enables CFAC to collect critical data that will directly inform the selected remedy design. By beginning this work in advance, we are ensuring that full-scale cleanup efforts can begin as soon as possible once the consent decree is formally entered.

### Purpose of the Pre-Design Field Work

The UAO authorizes a series of targeted investigations aimed at gathering detailed engineering data. This work will support final remedy design and focus on several critical areas:

- **Source control** – Designing a slurry wall to encapsulate the West Landfill and Wet Scrubber Sludge Pond source areas.
- **Soil sampling** – The process of gathering the exact volumes and locations of soil that require excavation and cleanup at identified hotspots.
- **Monitoring** – Optimizing the monitoring well network and confirming baseline conditions to support long-term performance evaluation.
    a. **Updating** – The Biological Assessment and performing consultation under the Endangered Species Act.
- **Supporting elements** – Designing a liner for the reservoir overflow ditch, planned for 2026.

## Field Activities Underway

Several field activities are taking place through late 2025:

- **Geotechnical program** – A Cone Penetrometer Testing (CPT) rig was mobilized in September to begin collecting in-situ measurement of the geotechnical properties of the soils. In-situ means soil properties are measured in place rather than a collection of soil samples for analysis at an off-site location, like a lab. Test pits were dug using a backhoe to examine site soils along the slurry wall alignment and collect bulk samples for laboratory testing. Two more drilling contractors will be mobilized in October, bringing multiple rigs to the site. Crews are conducting deep borings (125–150+ feet) along the proposed slurry wall alignment to define subsurface conditions and determine the wall depth and thickness. Three new monitoring wells are also being installed to improve the understanding of groundwater flow and plume boundaries.

Test pit showing sand and gravel deposits.

- **Groundwater and surface water sampling** – Samples are being collected to monitor plume location and concentrations.
- **Industrial landfill (north end) investigation** – Borings and test pits are characterizing subsurface conditions in this area.
- **Soil investigations** – Higher-density sampling is being performed to refine estimates of soil volumes requiring excavation and disposal.
- **Wet scrubber sludge pond landfill testing** – Stability and material characterization are being evaluated through borings and test pits.
- **North percolation ponds & asbestos landfills** – Additional sampling is underway at percolation ponds, and cover evaluations at asbestos landfill areas will verify thickness and condition, with improvements planned as needed.
- **Biological Assessment** – Update the biological assessment.
- **Reservoir overflow ditch** – Liner installation targeted for 2026.

## Near-Term Investigation Activities

On-site work is being carried out by drilling crews, samplers, surveyors, and engineering teams, typically six days a week during daytime hours. About two to three drill rigs will be active, along with a field crew and approximately four on-site engineers. While this work may result in intermittent equipment deliveries and increased daytime traffic, no impacts to nearby residents are expected. A specialized slurry-wall consultant is overseeing critical elements of the program.

## Reporting and Next Steps

Field teams will compile technical reports over the winter of 2025–26. These reports will provide the engineering detail necessary to finalize remedy designs, ensuring that full-scale remedy design followed by construction can proceed as soon as the consent decree is in place.

Equipment used for conducting the geotechnical investigation test pits adjacent to the west landfill.

# Consent Decree Timeline & Next Steps

The consent decree (CD) will serve as the legally binding agreement that establishes CFAC's responsibilities for long-term cleanup and site management. While the decree is being finalized, pre-design work is already underway through the UAO, ensuring that valuable time is not lost.

The CD will formalize the transition from investigation to full-scale design and implementation of the selected remedy. In the coming months, the process will include finalizing the draft decree, opening it for public review and comment, and then submitting it for court approval. Once approved, the CD will provide a clear framework for carrying out cleanup activities, with oversight from EPA and MDEQ.

By aligning pre-design fieldwork with the CD process, CFAC is positioned to begin remedial construction more quickly, maintaining momentum and moving decisively toward long-term protection of human health and the environment.

# Community Engagement & Looking Ahead

CFAC continues to prioritize open communication and transparency with the community.

On August 27, 2025, the Community Liaison Panel (CLP) met to receive an update on the Unilateral Administrative Order (UAO) and the upcoming pre-design field work. Meeting minutes are available on the project website at cfacproject.com/community. It is anticipated that the next CLP meeting will occur in conjunction with the consent decree (CD) public comment period.

The Columbia Falls Library will remain as a public repository for project materials. Documents will be provided in a digital format for in-library use. Community members who would like a physical copy of materials may use the library's print services. For questions about print service guidelines, please contact the Columbia Falls Library at 406-892-5919.

Looking ahead, we anticipate sharing more updates as remediation efforts progress. Future CLP meetings and regular newsletters will continue to provide opportunities for public input and engagement.

We value your interest and engagement. For questions, comments, or more information, please contact Kristine Fife at Kristine@bigskypublicrelations.com or call the project hotline at 406-207-4484, Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

# Additional Project Details

To learn more about this project or review cleanup alternative rankings in detail, visit the project website at **› CFACproject.com**

Columbia Falls Aluminum Company
1001 S Main Street STE 4151
Kalispell, MT 59901



# Contact

**CFAC Project Contacts**

John Stroiazzo
john.stroiazzo@glencore-us.com
(203) 918-5892