

CFAC Community Liaison Panel Meeting Minutes

Columbia Falls Aluminum Company (CFAC) Superfund Site

Date: May 27, 2026

Time: 6:03 – 7:11p.m.

Location: The Hub Downtown, 533 1st Ave E, Columbia Falls, MT 59912

Facilitator: Kristine Fife, Big Sky Public Relations

CLP Membership

Don Barnhart – Columbia Falls Mayor

Eric Hanks – Columbia Falls City Manager

Braxton Mitchell – House District 5

Carl Glimm – Senate District 3

Brad Abell – Flathead County Commission

Riley Larsen – U.S. Senator Tim Sheehy, Constituent Liaison

Kevin French – U. S. Senator Steve Daines, Field Representative

Brett Slaughter – U.S. Senator Steve Daines, Conservation and Natural Resources Liaison

Steve Howke – Office of Congressman Ryan Zinke, District Director

Julie Perchy – Office of Congressman Ryan Zinke

Franz Ingelfinger – Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks, Kalispell Area Wildlife Biologist

Susan Nicosia – Resident, Former Columbia Falls City Manager

Toby Liechti – Civil Engineer and Flathead County Board of Health

Karl Weeks – Columbia Falls Fire Chief

Steve Wright – Flathead Valley resident, Former CFAC Employee

Chauncy Means – Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes

Attendees

- **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):**
 - Carolina Balliew – Region 8, Remedial Section C Supervisor
 - Allie Archer — Superfund Project Manager
 - Mackenzie Meter — Community Involvement Coordinator
- **Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ):**
 - Dick Sloan — State project counterpart
- **Columbia Falls Aluminum Company (CFAC):**
 - John Stroiazzo— CFAC project lead
 - Cheryl Driscoll – President, Glencore Ltd
- **CLP Members Present:**
 - Steve Wright
 - Toby Liechti
 - Brad Abell
 - Don Barnhart
 - Steve Howke
 - Franz Ingelfinger
 - Brett Slaughter

- Riley Larson
- Eric Hanks

1.) Welcome, Introductions, and Agenda

- CLP members, agency partners, and attendees were welcomed.
- Agenda overview: EPA/MDEQ update, CFAC update on 2026 remediation activities, Panel Q&A, Public Q&A.

2.) Superfund Process Update, Allie Archer/Dick Sloan

Site Background

- The Columbia Falls Aluminum Company (CFAC) site was added to the National Priorities List (NPL) in 2016.
- Site investigations began in 2015 and continued for approximately five years.
- Investigations evaluated:
 - Surface and subsurface soils
 - Groundwater
 - Sediments
 - Seeps
 - Flathead River impacts
- The primary contaminants of concern are cyanide and fluoride associated with former spent potliner disposal areas.

Superfund Milestones

- **2015–2020:** Remedial Investigation
- **2023:** EPA released Proposed Plan for cleanup
- **January 2025:** EPA issued the Record of Decision (ROD), formally selecting the cleanup remedy

Selected Remedy Overview

EPA summarized the five primary components of the selected remedy:

1. Cedar Creek Reservoir Overflow Ditch Lining

- Install a liner in the overflow channel to reduce water infiltration into contaminated areas.

2. Soil Excavation and Consolidation

- Excavate contaminated surface soils located primarily north of the former plant area.
- Transport excavated material to an on-site industrial landfill.

3. Landfill Improvements

- Upgrade and cap several on-site landfills.
- Improve the cap on the center landfill.

4. Slurry Wall Installation

- Construct a fully encompassing slurry wall around:
 - Wet Scrubber Sludge Pond
 - West Landfill
- Purpose:
 - Prevent cyanide and fluoride contamination from reaching groundwater and the Flathead River.

5. Long-Term Monitoring and Institutional Controls

- Continued groundwater monitoring.
- Long-term maintenance and operation of remedial systems.
- Land use and groundwater restrictions where necessary.

Consent Decree Status

EPA reported that:

- EPA, Montana DEQ, and CFAC have signed the final Consent Decree.
- The document is currently under review by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ).
- DOJ will:
 - Lodge the Consent Decree with federal court.
 - Publish it for public comment.
- Timing remains dependent on DOJ review.

The Consent Decree will establish:

- Financial responsibility for cleanup.
- Long-term obligations of CFAC.
- Legal enforceability of the selected remedy.

3.) Community Involvement Update, Mackenzie Meter

EPA is updating the site's Community Involvement Plan (CIP).

Objectives include:

- Evaluating preferred communication methods.
- Assessing community information needs.
- Improving outreach during remedial action.

Key activities:

- Approximately 15 community interviews planned.
- Community members are encouraged to participate and provide feedback.

4.) 2026 Field Activities, John Stroiazzo

Work proceeding under a Unilateral Administrative Order (UAO) includes:

Cedar Creek Channel Lining

- Approximately 3,500 feet of channel will be lined.
- Anticipated start: Late July.
- Estimated duration: Approximately two months.

Soil Removal and Landfill Work

- Excavation of contaminated surface soils.
- Confirmation sampling following excavation.
- Placement of contaminated soils into the Industrial Landfill.
- Capping of disposed materials.
- Improvement of the existing Center Landfill cap.

Design and Investigation Activities

- Extensive geotechnical drilling completed in 2024.
- Approximately \$3.5 million spent on:
 - Drilling
 - Monitoring well installation
 - Soil characterization
 - Groundwater and surface water sampling
- Data are being used to support detailed engineering designs, including the slurry wall.

Groundwater Monitoring Update

Current Findings

- Groundwater monitoring continues throughout the site.
- Spring groundwater and surface water sampling has been completed.
- Voluntary residential well sampling near Aluminum City also continues.

Trends

- Cyanide and fluoride concentrations remain above standards in some areas.
- Concentrations show a gradual declining trend.
- Declines are attributed to:
 - Existing landfill caps.
 - Reduced water inputs since plant closure in 2009.

Groundwater Controls

- Future groundwater restrictions are anticipated.
- Controlled Groundwater Areas will likely be established to prevent installation of new wells in affected areas.
- Long-term monitoring will continue indefinitely.

5.) Questions and Discussion

Cedar Creek Channel

Discussion focused on:

- Purpose of the channel.
- Water management functions.
- Flood control history.
- Importance of reducing infiltration into contaminated areas.

PFAS ("Forever Chemicals")

EPA clarified:

- PFAS/PFOA were evaluated.
- No connection was identified between PFAS and aluminum smelting operations at CFAC.
- PFAS are not part of the CFAC Superfund remedy.

Dust and Equipment Controls

EPA and CFAC confirmed:

- Dust suppression measures will be implemented.
- Water trucks will be used as necessary.
- Equipment decontamination procedures are required.
- Waste generated during decontamination is managed appropriately.

Land Reuse and Development

EPA discussed:

- Much of the site has been evaluated for future residential and commercial/industrial use.
- Portions of the property are considered suitable for residential development.
- Landfill areas will remain restricted and fenced.
- EPA does not determine zoning or land use but ensures uses are protective of human health and the environment.

Teakettle Heights Development

EPA confirmed:

- The proposed residential development area has been evaluated for residential use.
- No additional cleanup was required for residential development in that area.
- Future coordination with EPA would be needed if land uses change in areas not previously evaluated for residential use.

Trespassing Concerns

Discussion included:

- Ongoing trespassing issues on private property.
- Damage to fences and gates.
- Equipment theft concerns.
- EPA noted its authority is limited in this regard.
- Local law enforcement should be contacted regarding trespassing enforcement.

6.) Office Hours Announcement

EPA representatives announced community office hours:

Location: Montana Coffee Traders, Columbia Falls

Time: 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m., May 28, 2026

Community members were encouraged to attend for informal discussion and questions.

7.) Closing Remarks

- Attendees were encouraged to review project materials and fact sheets.
- Meeting documents and updates are available through:
 - CFAC Project Website: cfacproject.com
 - Local library repositories
- Meeting organizers thanked community members and panel participants for their continued involvement.

8.) Meeting Adjourned

Meeting minutes prepared by Kristine Fife from audio transcription.