



# ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COUNCIL

PO BOX 201704  
HELENA, MONTANA 59620-1704  
(406) 444-3742

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April 10, 2024

KC Becker, administrator  
EPA Region 8  
1595 Wynkoop St.  
Denver, CO 80202-1129

Dear KC,

I am writing to you on behalf of concerned citizens regarding the final Superfund cleanup plan proposed for the Columbia Falls Aluminum Company site in Columbia Falls, Montana, a site which is situated in proximity to the Flathead River. At our March 14, 2024, Environmental Quality Council meeting, it became apparent to the council that the community has serious reservations about the proposed final remediation plan.

The Columbia Falls Aluminum Company (CFAC) site has been a matter of concern for the community for many years due to its historical operations involving the production of aluminum, which resulted in the release of hazardous substances into the environment. While we appreciate the soil testing, the water sampling, and other cleanup efforts made by the Environmental Protection Agency to address these issues and develop a cleanup plan, we believe that more-thorough measures are necessary to ensure the protection of human health and the environment.

Specifically, our concerns center around the presence of potliner waste, which are known to contain hazardous substances such as cyanide and fluoride. These toxins have the potential to leach into the surrounding soil and groundwater, posing a long-term risk to public health and the ecosystem, including the nearby Flathead River. The presence of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) causes us additional concern. The agency's proposed plan to leave and cap or cover most of the contaminated areas, contain migrating toxins with a slurry wall, and monitor groundwater indefinitely do not do enough in the council's estimation.

Given the gravity of these concerns and the implications for the health and safety of the community, we respectfully request that the EPA pause its decision on the final cleanup plan for the CFAC site. We believe that additional time is needed to thoroughly assess the potential risks associated with the EPA's preferred clean-up alternative on this complex site and to explore an alternative prioritizes off-site removal of contaminants. The council believes that a made-in-Montana (or made-in-Columbia Falls) solution would foster a local sense of ownership and commitment, while adding flexibility and adaptability in case of changing circumstances.

Furthermore, we urge the EPA to continue in meaningful dialogue with local stakeholders, environmental organizations, and elected officials to ensure that their perspectives and concerns are fully considered in the final decision-making process.

The health and well-being of the community depend on the thorough and effective cleanup of the CFAC site. The Environmental Quality Council appreciates your attention to this matter and looks forward to working collaboratively with the EPA to develop a cleanup plan that prioritizes the protection of human health and the environment.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Rep. Steve Gunderson, chairman  
Cc: Matthew Dorrington, remedial project manager  
U.S. EPA/CFAC  
Eastern end of Aluminum Drive  
Columbia Falls, MT 59912