

Smurfit-Stone Mill Technical Working Group (TWG) Meeting

Meeting Read out:

A Smurfit-Stone Mill Technical Working Group Meeting took place at EPA's Helena, MT office on November 13 from 2:00-4:00 pm. Representatives from EPA, DEQ, NRDP, Missoula County and the potentially responsible parties' (PRP) contractor were in attendance in person. Representatives from DPHHS, DEQ, CAG admin team, USFS, USFWS, Westrock, International Paper, Newfields, Clark Fork Coalition, and John Tester's office were in attendance online. Additionally, two Missoula County Commissioners, two state representatives, and one candidate for Montana's congressional race were in attendance online.

Newfields, representing the PRPs, presented on the current groundwater conceptual site model. This included discussions on the influence of the Clark Fork River and Frenchtown Irrigation Ditch on site groundwater and how there have been significant changes from Mill operations to current conditions, and those historical conditions were taken into account when choosing well locations and while developing the Remedial Investigation Work Plan.

EPA's Allie Archer then discussed with the group the overarching goals of a Remedial Investigation in CERCLA. She reviewed what the data collected to date tells us about the contaminants of concerns (COCs) and risks from groundwater at the site and how that information will be used to help EPA make cleanup decisions. EPA then presented their rationale for conducting biannual sampling which included a discussion on sampling during both high and low groundwater conditions to ensure we are capturing the highest concentrations of COCs.

Newfields then presented the statistical evaluations conducted to determine if seasonal patterns onsite would change the current understanding of the site's nature and extent of contamination or the risk assessments. The presentation concluded that there are some COCs that have a relationship with groundwater levels, but most on site do not show a strong relationship.

Missoula County's (MC) Elena Evans presented rationale for quarterly sampling. MC described how groundwater moving through the site historically left contaminants in its wake and suggested that those areas are not being captured by both the locations and depths of current monitoring wells onsite and by the frequency of sampling. MC presented that they are requesting quarterly monitoring for 2024-2025.

EPA has attached the presentation material that they prepared for the TWG meeting. Please request presentation material from the other parties (Newfields and Missoula County) if the EQC has interest in viewing it.

Current Update:

In the spirit of moving work on the Site forward, the EPA team has agreed to proceed with quarterly sampling. This will involve four seasonal sampling events beginning as soon as possible, dependent on multiple factors. EPA will provide a future update on the specifics of what quarterly sampling will entail. This sampling will be in addition to source characterization activities planned for 2024. EPA is currently scheduling future technical working group meetings.