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Ravalli County Commissioners

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Update for S&W Sawmill Facility

Background: The S&W Sawmill Facility (Facility) is located approximately a half-mile north of Darby, Montana, at the intersection of U.S. Highway 93 and Bunkhouse Road. Environmental contamination from the historic sawmill is being regulated as a Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation & Liability Act (CECRA), or “state superfund,” facility. Currently, investigation and cleanup are being addressed by the lead liable party, International Paper (IP), under the oversight of the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

Irrigation Ditch Cleanup: At the beginning of 2022 on a portion of Waddell Ditch north of Bunkhouse Road, IP performed an interim action to cleanup ditch sediments. In this ditch, roughly 1 to 2 feet of sediments were excavated and properly disposed of offsite at the Missoula Landfill. Sediment samples were collected to document the condition of the sediments left behind. Clean fill soils were brought to the Facility and used to rebuild the ditch.

Moving forward, IP will continue to monitor the ditch to ensure that water is flowing unobstructed in the area reclaimed. IP will be collecting surface water samples in the ditch this Spring to determine the effectiveness of the cleanup. Samples will be collected at specific locations upstream (background) and downstream of the remediated area.

Shallow Soil Cleanup: On the south side of the former sawmill operations area, there is a 10-acre area that had surface soil contamination, primarily dioxins/furans, that exceeded commercial/industrial cleanup levels for the site. Prompted by local community interest for additional parking during rodeo events, IP proposed an interim action to cleanup this area. The top 6 inches of soil were excavated and removed from the entire 10-acre area in 2021 and 2022, and this soil was properly disposed offsite at the Missoula Landfill. IP performed confirmation sampling activities to ensure that the remaining soils met site-specific cleanup levels that would be suitable for use as a parking lot.

IP still has some minor reclamation activities to perform in this area, including revegetation activities. These activities will be completed in the Spring of 2023.

1 of 2

S&W Facility Status: In 2022, IP updated the site-specific cleanup levels for the Facility. Cleanup levels are determined to ensure protection of human health as well as protection of groundwater. Following this update, IP was required to submit a revised Feasibility Study Work Plan (FSWP). The FSWP serves as a roadmap for evaluating cleanup options appropriate for the Facility. DEQ anticipates this revised FSWP to be submitted in June 2023.

DEQ anticipates that IP will complete the FSWP and begin the Feasibility Study (FS) report in 2023, continuing into 2024. DEQ will then prepare the Proposed Plan, which will identify DEQ’s preferred remedy for cleaning up the Facility. The Proposed Plan will be made available for review and public comment, anticipated for late 2024. Upon completion of the public comment period, DEQ will evaluate comments received, make any necessary changes to the final remedy, and issue the Record of Decision (ROD). The ROD is DEQ’s final selection of the remedy for cleaning up the Facility. IP will be required to implement the actions required in the ROD and will prepare documents outlining the implementation strategy and specific engineering design work needed to implement DEQ’s selected remedy.



Sediment Excavation in Waddell Ditch

DEQ

MONTANA

S& W Sawmill Facility

MARCH 2023 UPDATE



Completed excavation of area for rodeo parking

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