EPA adds Columbia Falls Aluminum Company site to Superfund list (Montana)

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(Denver, Colo. – September 9, 2016) The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) today added the Anaconda Aluminum Co Columbia Falls Reduction Plant site, also known as the Columbia Falls Aluminum Company (CFAC) site, in Columbia Falls, Montana, to the National Priorities List (NPL). Sites on the NPL are often referred to as Superfund sites. Superfund is the federal program that investigates and cleans up contamination at sites that pose a risk to human health and the environment.

"The addition of the Columbia Falls Aluminum Company site to the National Priorities List will ensure the comprehensive investigation and cleanup of contaminants and help secure future opportunities for the reuse of this prominent property along the Flathead River," said Shaun McGrath, EPA Region 8 Administrator. "EPA's action is based on a thorough review of site data and input from the local community."

A remedial investigation of the CFAC site is underway and is being completed by CFAC and its contractors through an administrative agreement signed in November of 2015. This effort includes an investigation of soils, river sediments, and ground and surface water to determine the nature and extent of contamination at the site. When completed, the investigation will detail the nature and extent of contamination, identify potential risks to human health and the environment, and inform any necessary cleanup requirements and alternatives.

The CFAC site is located outside Columbia Falls near the south entrance of Glacier National Park. The CFAC plant operated between 1955 and 2009 and created significant quantities of spent potliner material, a federally listed hazardous waste, as a byproduct of the aluminum smelting process. Spent potliner material is known to contain cyanide compounds that can leach into groundwater. Other contaminants of potential concern at the site include arsenic, cadmium, chromium, lead, manganese, nickel, selenium and zinc, fluoride, volatile organic compounds, semi-volatile organic compounds, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, polychlorinated biphenyl compounds, and pesticides.

EPA proposed the CFAC site for addition to the NPL on March 26, 2015. The agency carefully considered all comments received during the public comment period for the proposal. A summary of EPA's responses to public comments can be found at https://www.epa.gov/superfund/superfund-national-priorities-list-npl.

EPA staff will coordinate with the community of Columbia Falls to schedule public meetings and other public events over the next few months to discuss the next steps and outline how the public can engage in the Superfund process moving forward.

For more information and access to site documents, visit: https://www.epa.gov/superfund/columbia-falls.