While the Superfund "cleanup" has been going on for a long time, citizens need to be ever vigilant about the quality of the cleanup Butte is getting. Recent community meetings have focused on the following problems.

Montana Pole Plant

Current treatment methods at the Montana Pole Plant have not been effective in lessening dioxin's threat in the soils nor in groundwater. PCP/dioxin contamination north of Silver Bow Creek has been ignored, as has the expansion of the groundwater contaminant plume. EPA and the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) have dismissed this failure to meet their own treatment goals and intend to continue using the same old failed cleanup method.

The continuing presence of significant levels of dioxin, PCBs and furans is an immediate threat to the health of resident's near the Pole Plant and a continuing threat to groundwater and surface water. Dioxin is a very potent carcinogen with no really safe levels of exposure. EPA and MDEQ promised Butte residents an active cleanup but this promise has been abandoned in favor of the passive remedy of capping and institutional controls that leave the threat in place.

The contaminants at the Pole Plant will all be covered with only 12 inches of topsoil. Previous capping on the Butte Hill, which uses more soil than the level at Montana Pole, has not worked well. The most toxic substances in Butte (dioxins, PCPs and furans) are to be covered with the least amount of soil. Caps, as we have already seen in Butte, are susceptible to failure by means of: bio-irrigation, advection, desiccation, erosion, weathering, bio-intrusion and stabilization problems. Caps also have significant construction, repair and maintenance problems. Yet, caps are all the EPA offers Butte residents.

Butte Health Study

Citizens have a right to know whether or not Superfund has been effective in protecting public health from the dangers of heavy metal exposure in Butte. A while back, Stacie Barry conducted a health study for her PhD at Montana Tech that lead to the clear inference that Superfund was not working to protect public health. While denigrating Stacie's work, the EPA and Butte Silver Bow created their own health study team to conduct a health study of Butte. What was interesting was that at the same time that the new health study was announced, it was also stated that the study would show that human health was being protected in Butte. It is poor scientific research methodology to state the results of a study before the study is conducted. It is obvious that EPA only wanted a propaganda piece to allay the fears of Butte residents.

Parrott Tailings

The Parrott Tailings are a threat to Butte's ground water and should have been removed as part of the Butte Priority Soils Remedy. EPA used a "model" to show that the Parrott Tailings posed no threat to Butte's water. Although the Parrott Tailing's real data shows that this EPA "model" is flawed, EPA still denies the facts in favor of the model.

Lead and Arsenic Cleanup Action Levels

Action levels trigger cleanup. Recently, the Centers for Disease Control tightened the acceptable blood lead level for children, saying that the old standard that EPA used in establishing the lead action levels in Butte was no longer protective. EPA refuses to tighten its more permissive/less protective lead action levels in light of the CDC's findings. The basis of EPA's arsenic action levels is even more mysterious. Citizens have asked EPA to justify its arsenic action levels for Butte but in reply EPA officials have not been able to produce the data that lead to the arsenic action levels, instead saying that the arsenic action levels were the result of agency intuition. How can EPA claim that its subjective intuitive decisions are examples of "good science?" Also, EPA uses acute measures of arsenic exposure while Butte's arsenic problem is chronic exposure.

Berkeley Pit

Releasing lime treated water into Silver Bow Creek from the Pit could produce significant scaling problems that could harm Silver Bow Creek. EPA dismisses these concerns as "alarmist."

Citizens need to hold EPA and MDEQ accountable for the substandard cleanup we have received. EPA's approach to cleanup in Butte has become ossified.