Questions from Nora Saks, MT Public Radio

What are his priorities for EPA Region 8? How are they similar or different to Doug Benevento's? What about goals/priorities in Montana, and Butte (and Anaconda) specifically? How do they fit into the Trump EPA Administration's goal?

The overall priority, shared with Doug Benevento, is to advance the Agency's mission and protect human health and the environment for our mountain west residents.

Specifically, my top priorities at EPA Region 8 are drinking water, Superfund cleanup, and risk communication. Drinking water issues include PFAS, the lead and copper rule, and making sure our direct implementation responsibilities are met in Indian Country and Wyoming. We have made progress with certain Superfund sites in Montana, Colorado and elsewhere, but we cannot let up, and there is much work to do on other sites.

My priorities and goals for Butte and Anaconda is to continue to build upon the ongoing consent decree negotiations to realize final remedies for these sites. I have tremendous faith in our legal and technical teams to continue this effort.

What are the other goals with Superfund in the region? How does Butte fit (or not fit) into that bigger picture?

The goals of the Superfund program in Region 8 are to continue to identify and clean up the most hazardous waste sites in the Region to protect public health and our natural environment. These cleanup efforts support local economies and enhances quality of life, prevents future releases of hazardous substances, and leads to new advances in science and technology.

In addition to protecting public health and restoring the environment, Superfund cleanups support positive economic and social outcomes in communities throughout Region 8. These gains have been and will continue to be realized in Butte and Anaconda.

Trust and the sense of urgency that Benevento brought are viewed as critical factors in getting closer to a final Superfund deal and cleanup for Butte. How does Adm. Sopkin see his role in this community, and this cleanup?

I feel my role is similar do Doug Benevento's role, in that I want to encourage all parties to reach consent decrees at both sites so community members can be assured of final remedies that they are proud of and that protect human health and the environment.

Butte seems to be on the verge of getting a consent decree signed - but at what point would EPA decide to move to a UAO and why?

We have made great strides in the consent decree negotiations and they are still ongoing. We hope to have these finalized in the coming months, and I don't anticipate needing to move to a UAO at this time.

A lot of folks are worried that without Benevento, EPA will lose its focus on Butte and Anaconda. What assurances can you give the community that that won't happen?

EPA has very capable site teams who have been engaged at the Butte and Anaconda Superfund sites for many years, and will continue to do so. We have made great strides in the consent decree negotiations, ongoing clean-ups and community Involvement and I want to assure the public that these efforts will continue under my direction.