



Missoula City-County Health Department

WATER QUALITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

301 West Alder Street | Missoula MT 59802-4123
www.co.missoula.mt.us/healthadvisory

Phone | 406.258.4890
Fax | 406.258.4781

Joe Vranka, Superfund Branch Chief
EPA, Region 8, Montana Office, Federal Building
10 West 15th Street, Suite 3200
Helena, MT 59626

Tom Livers, Director
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Helena MT 59620

Dear Mr. Vranka and Mr. Livers,

The Missoula County Water Quality Advisory Council has reviewed the October 11, 2016 letter submitted by the Missoula County Commissioners, including six recommendations for site investigation and improved public process regarding the Smurfit-Stone mill site.

The Water Quality Advisory Council membership is comprised of twenty individuals from Missoula County, including those with technical expertise in areas related to water quality, such as hydrology, soil science, chemistry, natural resources, engineering, and environmental law; employees (not elected officials) of local government whose work pertains to water quality; large water users; representatives of public interest groups; one citizen-at-large; and one student member. Our charge is to provide consultation to the Missoula City-County Water Quality District Board and staff for the purpose of protecting, maintaining, and restoring the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the waters of Missoula County.

We find the Commissioners' requests to be appropriate and we support them with the following modifications:

1. We believe it is inappropriate to label the waste disposal areas at the site as "landfills". This includes sludge impoundments and other solid waste disposal areas that are located near the river and in shallow groundwater. These waste disposal areas were not designed, operated or regulated in accordance with Montana Solid Waste Management statutes and regulations, or RCRA, and as a result should not be considered to be landfills that are in compliance with State and Federal regulations. We suggest that they be referred to as waste dumps or disposal areas instead of landfills.
2. We believe that the fish tissue investigations at the site are an important task that should be prioritized by the agencies. We support additional fish tissue work that includes larger sampling areas both downstream and upstream of the site, and sampling of additional game and non-game aquatic species. We recommend that the protocol for sampling be in accordance with established EPA guidance, which includes fish skin and fatty tissues in sampling protocols. We

support the inclusion of so called co planar PCBs in the fish tissue investigation. These dioxin-like PCBs were included in Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks' recent investigation of fish in Noxon Reservoir, and the results indicated significant concentrations of these forms of PCBs. We also believe that co planar PCBs should be included in all soil and groundwater sampling at the site, in addition to the commonly sampled Aroclors.

3. We support the recommendation for additional downstream sediment investigation. Work conducted to date has included only two downstream sediment sites, which may not accurately represent downstream concentrations of contaminants in sediments or risks to aquatic life and human health. Sampling should be conducted at additional downstream sites, including areas of sediment deposition and, if possible, some areas of deposition in the floodplain near Frenchtown, which were inundated during the 2011 flood.

We look forward to an improved public process at the Smurfit-Stone site in the future, and invite EPA and DEQ to attend our next meeting in November. This meeting would normally take place on November 8, which is an election day this year. So, we will likely reschedule this meeting for November 15. Please let us know if you are able to attend this meeting, which will run from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. and will be held at 301 W. Alder, in the second floor conference room. We request an opportunity to review all site data prior to this meeting.

Sincerely,



Brett Rosenberg
Water Quality Advisory Council Vice-Chair