

2023 Site Update



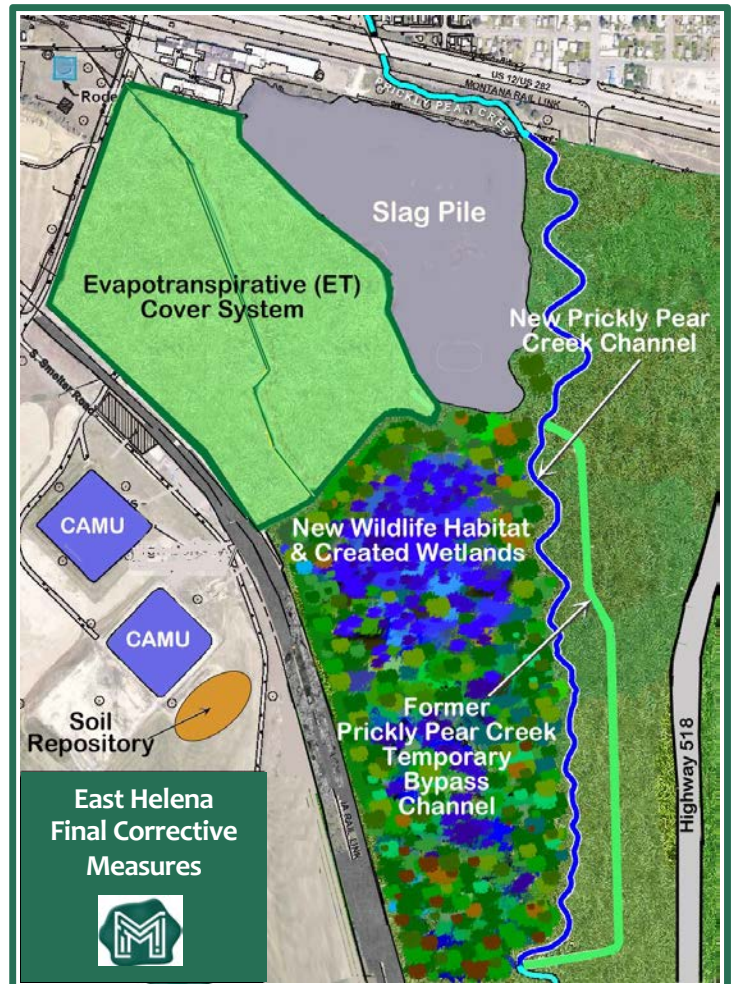
Aerial view of former ASARCO Smelter before cleanup

The Cleanup Solution

In the last 12 years, contamination at the former smelter has largely been addressed. A 62-acre evapotranspirative (ET) cover—the largest contiguous ET cover in the country—was constructed over the entire former smelter area. The ET cover eliminates risk of direct-contact (human, animal, bird) exposure to contaminated soils, and prevents leaching of contaminants into groundwater. The natural, self-sustaining ET cover also stores and sheds clean stormwater. Moving PPC away from the smelter and the slag pile and draining the manmade lakes have lowered groundwater levels under the former smelter plant. This dramatically reduced the volume of groundwater flowing through contaminated soils, preventing groundwater contamination. In 2023, the Montana Environmental Trust Group (METG) completed removal of the PPC Temporary Bypass Channel and planting new wetlands vegetation. Groundwater contamination has been further reduced by removing select areas of highly contaminated soils that were a source of contamination to groundwater.

The Environmental Challenge

More than a century of lead smelting left extensive contamination in soil and groundwater at the former ASARCO Smelter in East Helena. Soils contaminated with lead, arsenic, and other metals posed a threat to people, migratory birds, and other direct-contact receptors. Precipitation leached contaminants from smelter soils into groundwater and mobilized surface soil contaminants into stormwater runoff. Surface waters from Prickly Pear Creek (PPC) and two manmade lakes raised groundwater levels under the former smelter and the slag pile, pushing groundwater through impacted soils and adding contaminants to groundwater that resulted in plumes of arsenic and selenium migrating off-site.



Shown are the ET cover, two closed corrective action management units (CAMUs), the new Prickly Pear Creek (PPC) Channel, the former PPC Temporary Bypass Channel, and the new soil repository.

2023 East Helena Cleanup Update and Results



Former Temporary Bypass Channel Area

Realigned Prickly Pear Creek, Enhanced Wetlands, and New Floodplain

In 2023, METG finished removing the 0.75-mile-long Prickly Pear Creek Temporary Bypass Channel and planting wetlands vegetation. The last remaining cleanup measure will entail grading and capping the 16-million-ton slag pile, after the uppermost 2 million tons of unfumed slag are crushed, loaded into rail cars, shipped to Canada, and transported by oceangoing vessels to South Korea. The crushed slag is being processed in South Korea to recover valuable metals such as zinc. After metals have been extracted, the remaining material will be used to manufacture cement.

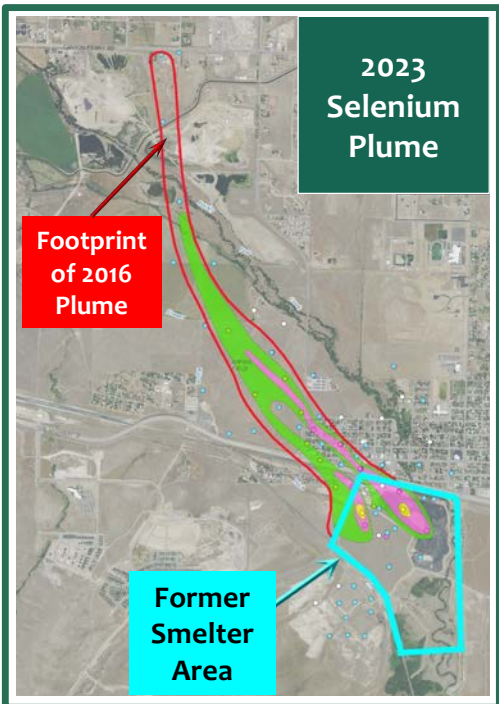
Unfumed Slag Removal Project



Loading crushed slag into rail cars for transport to Canada



Crushed slag stockpile on Site



The selenium plume has receded 4,000 feet since 2016—and 2,300 feet since 2022 alone.

Cleanup Results

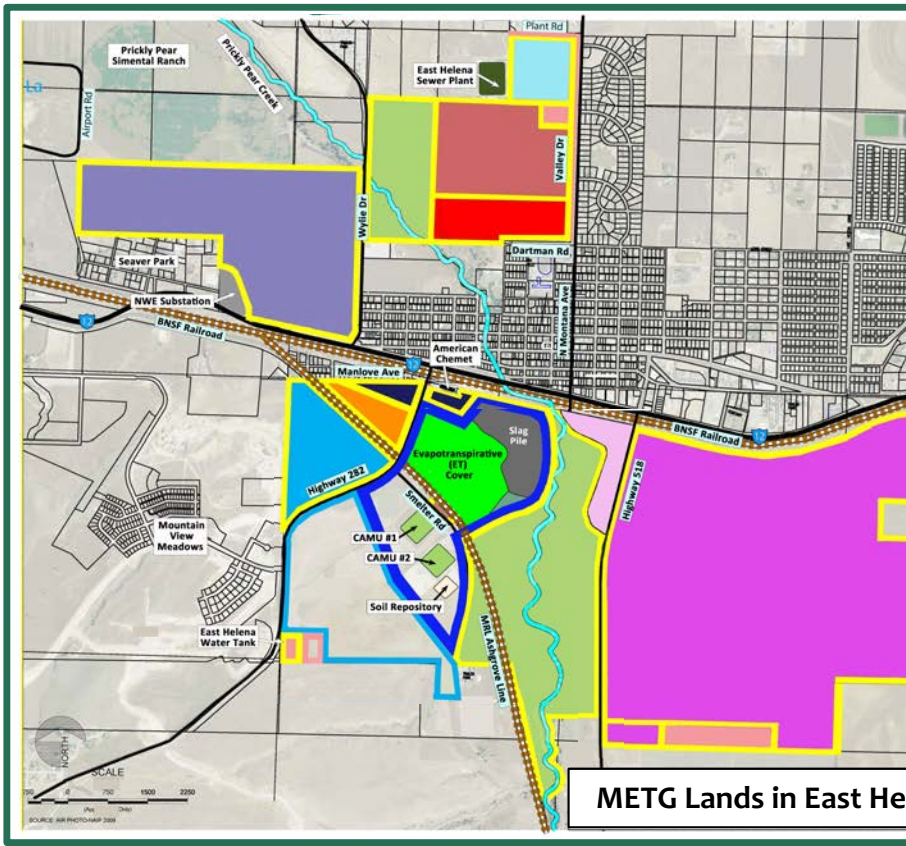
Arsenic and selenium concentrations have dropped by more than 50% on the Smelter site since 2016. The off-site selenium plume has receded by three-quarters of a mile. Dilapidated buildings and other remnants of the former smelter have been demolished and replaced with a graded, vegetated ET cover. Demolition debris and contaminated source area materials have been safely stored under the ET cover or in the two corrective action management units (CAMUs). Stormwater is now stored in or shed clean from the ET cover. The relocated Prickly Pear Creek (PPC) now flows in a natural, meandering 1.25-mile-long channel. One hundred acres of new floodplain provide bird habitat and flood storage capacity to mitigate flooding in downstream flood-prone areas of East Helena. New, enhanced wetlands have replaced the manmade lakes and support diverse wildlife. Smelter Dam, once used to store water in the manmade lakes, has been removed—which eliminates a major barrier to fish migration between the PPC headwaters and Lake Helena.

About the Montana Environmental Trust Group (METG)

METG is the court-appointed Trustee charged with remediating and facilitating safe reuse of former ASARCO lands, under U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) oversight and for the benefit of the United States and the State of Montana.

2023 Redevelopment Update and Results

In 2023, METG sold **836 acres** of former ASARCO lands to American Chemet, Power Townsend, Habitat for Humanity, and the Oakland Companies. The buyers plan to develop the lands for more than 1,230 new single and multifamily residential homes, schools, a rail-accessed light manufacturing center, office buildings, and a 70-acre commercial center that may include restaurants, grocery stores, banks, and hotels. METG also facilitated the donation of 45 acres to the City of East Helena for future City services and a new rodeo arena. Implementation of these new developments is expected to occur over the next 3 to 20 years and require investments in infrastructure and property improvements of more than \$1.6 billion.



Purchaser or Grantee*	New Use	Acres
East Helena Public Schools	Prickly Pear Elementary School	50*
Town Pump	Mixed Use/Commercial Development	254
Oakland Companies	319-Home Highland Meadows Subdivision	100
East Helena Public Schools	East Helena High School	35
American Chemet	Expanded Manufacturing Plant and Office	13
Power Townsend	Light Manufacturing Center	26
Habitat for Humanity	257-Home Residential Subdivision	72
Oakland Companies	Commercial and 1000+ Residential Homes	731
Montana Propane	Intermodal Distribution Center	3
Prickly Pear Land Trust	Greenway Trail	322*
City of East Helena**	Roads, Utilities, City Services, and Rodeo Arena	57*
Total East Helena Land Sales and Donations As Of 11/9/2023:		1,663

* Property Donated to Grantee
** Includes Search and Rescue Parcel Donated to County

Plans for Remaining Property	Acres
Property Under Contract for Sale to Habitat for Humanity	136
Property Remaining/Available for Sale and Redevelopment	20
Property Proposed for Donation to City of East Helena	5
Undevelopable/Unsalable Land	211
Total Remaining METG East Helena Land:	372

As summarized in Table 1, METG has sold or donated **1,663 acres** of the **2,035 acres** it acquired from ASARCO in 2009. Thus far, **777 acres** have been transformed into public and private developments, including the new Prickly Pear Elementary School, the new East Helena High School, the 300+ single-family residential Highland Meadows subdivision, a 26,000-square-foot Town Pump store, and the 8-mile-long Greenway Trail—a 322-acre wildlife habitat and recreational area along the reconstructed, remediated, and restored Prickly Pear Creek.

METG Redeveloped Lands in East Helena



Of the **372 acres** still owned by METG, only 20 acres are available for sale. The remaining land is: under contract for sale to Habitat for Humanity; slated for donation to the City; or unsalable because it will be held in perpetuity for long-term stewardship. See Table 2.

If you have questions, please contact:

Cindy Brooks, METG – cb@g-etg.com, 617-448-9762
 Bridget Williams, EPA – williams.bridget@epa.gov, 406-594-8792
 Visit: mtenvironmentaltrust.org