Butte’s Future
A Word from Restore Our Creek Coalition

2017 is upon us and with it comes the promise of great growth and change. As part of the effort to Restore Our Silver Bow Creek, we’re excited to launch our inaugural Quarterly ROCC Newsletter, which is specifically designed to inform Butte about efforts to have the EPA, BP/ARCO, Butte–Silver Bow, and State of Montana do the right things in the restoration of Silver Bow Creek.

It is our hope that you will find great value in the content of the newsletter and that it will aid in keeping you abreast of the steps made for our community to see a restored Silver Bow Creek. Restoring Silver Bow Creek, in the heart of Butte from Texas Avenue and moving west, is a community wide effort to produce an environment that endures for Butte’s economic and environmental future. Butte deserves no less of a cleanup than what the upper Clark Fork received all the way to Missoula—— including the Mill Town Dam removal and park restoration, the Greenway, and the fishing ponds.

With each passing year, businesses change, economies rise and fall, children age and grow (adults stay the same age, of course), and our community... continues to grapple with an uncertain environmental and economic future. Restoring Silver Bow Creek is our community’s effort to take control of a portion of that future and move Butte in a direction that is sustainable and holds hope for greater things to come.

In 2017, we will likely see the responsible government agencies and private parties continuing to make decisions that affect Butte’s future in a clandestine fashion -- decisions that will eternally affect the future of Butte.

This newsletter represents just one part of ROCC’s effort to keep you informed about our coalitions’ efforts to

Restore Our Silver Bow Creek and to do our best in making EPA, BP/ARCO, Butte–Silver Bow, and the State of Montana do what’s right for our community and the future of its citizens and economy.

The quarterly newsletter is simply a tool to keep you informed about Restore Our Creek, and it is our job to help you see how a Restored Creek can help reinvigorate the pride in our community and the future prosperity of Butte. Together we will make 2017 the best year yet!

Silver Bow Headwaters Park!

During November 2016 Restore Our Creek presented the Silver Bow Headwaters Park Conceptual Plan completed by Interval Projects. The Plan, based on public input from several meetings, was presented to members of the Consent Decree negotiators (see Public Engagement article below).

The following architects’ renditions provide ideas of what a restored Silver Bow Creek Park from Texas Avenue to Montana Street could look like once tailings are removed from the Parrot, Northside, and Diggings East and a creek has been restored.
ROCC Public Engagement

Public Forum

On January 19, 2016 ROCC began a series of public forums to inform and engage Butte citizens about Consent Decree negotiations and ask the people of Butte how they would like to see Silver Bow Creek restored. On January 19, The Montana Standard and ROCC hosted a Public Forum with presentations by the Environmental Protection Agency, State of Montana Department of Environmental Quality and Natural Resource Damage Program, and Butte–Silver Bow to update the community on upper Silver Bow Creek remediation and restoration efforts. BP/ARCO did not attend the Forum. Over 150 people attended the event to listen and ask questions.

Design Workshops

Several Design Workshops were held in the spring of 2016 to engage the public with an opportunity to present their vision and ideas for end use of Silver Bow Creek following remediation and restoration efforts. The workshops were well attended and many ideas were presented. Ideas were compiled into categories for use later to develop a comprehensive proposal for the Silver Bow Creek Corridor.
Public engagement continued into the fall with workshops targeted to adjacent and low income neighborhoods. Ideas, issues, and concerns from these workshops were added to the development of the comprehensive plan.

**ROCC Works Toward a Vision**

**EPA comes to Butte**

In June ROCC had an opportunity to meet with Shaun McGrath, Region 8 Administrator with the Environmental Protection Agency. ROCC presented their vision for a restored Silver Bow Creek and community support for the project. A discussion followed regarding issues and concerns of the agencies. Shaun McGrath listened intently to the discussion with ROCC. McGrath verified the need for a comprehensive vision for an end-use (amenities and features) for the entire corridor. Shaun recognized the value in working toward a goal of what the community should look like following cleanup of Silver Bow Creek after decades of mining activity in Butte. ROCC stated it is hard for Consent Decree negotiators to agree on a cleanup if they don’t look comprehensively at our community to develop a long-term goal to achieve a cleanup that Butte citizens deserve.

June 3, 2016 meeting with Shaun McGrath (EPA), 5th from the right

**Silver Bow Headwaters Park Conceptual Plan**

Following the meeting with EPA’s Shaun McGrath ROCC hired a consultant to assist with development of a plan depicting a vision for a restored Silver Bow Creek. After a selection process by ROCC, Interval Projects, a New York City based firm, was contracted to develop a concept plan for Silver Bow Creek: The final document shows the vision of how Silver Bow Creek may look after cleanup and is entitled: **Silver Bow Creek Headwaters Park**. The plan identified opportunities for a comprehensive restoration and development of the Silver Bow Creek from Texas Avenue to Montana Street. Ideas and opportunities identified by the public and members of ROCC include: public use corridor and connectivity with walking and bike paths, recreation spaces, user support, cultural programs, educational resources, and wetland and riparian. The plan is available on the ROCC website.

In a follow up meeting held in November 3, 2016, ROCC presented the **Silver Bow Creek Headwaters Park Comprehensive Plan** to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), State of Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and Natural Resource Damage Program (NRDP), Butte–Silver Bow (BSB) and BP/ARCO. ROCC ended the presentation with a request for agencies to provide written feedback to the proposed Park. Log onto [www.restoreourcreek.org](http://www.restoreourcreek.org) to review the Plan and conceptual images.

ROCC is reviewing responses from EPA, the State, and BP/ARCO. ROCC will be meeting with Butte–Silver Bow Chief Executive Dave Palmer to discuss the **Silver Bow Creek Headwaters Park** plan and Butte’s vision to restore Silver Bow Creek.

November 2016 presentation to EPA, DEQ, NRD, BP/ARCO, BSB

**ROCC Tackles Tough Questions**

ROCC understands there are hurdles to achieve the vision of a restored Silver Bow Creek. Throughout involvement with the public and meetings with local, state, and federal agencies questions arise about the source of water for the creek and how to manage storm water that comes off the Butte Hill.
It is not ROCC’s job to answer these questions. After all it’s the agencies’ job (EPA and others) to restore the creek to an environmentally safe level that includes a safe environment for the people of Butte.

But in order confirm the feasibility of our plan, ROCC worked with a variety of Butte experts to provide ideas. Two ROCC committees are working on these issues working with Consent Decree negotiating agencies, community leaders, and Montana Tech.

ROCC Water Committee: “Water, Water Everywhere?”

The ROCC Water committee, chaired by Evan Barrett, has been working diligently to quantify the amount and sources of water that might contribute to the needed water flow for a restored and free-flowing Silver Bow Creek that would run between Texas Avenue and its convergence with Blacktail Creek near Montana Street. Water Committee members include: Joe Griffin, Northey Tretheway, Elizabeth Erickson, Mary Kay Craig, Larry Curran, Rick Griffith, and Ken Reick, with advice and technical assistance from John Metesh of the Montana Bureau of Mines & Geology and Padraig Cunneen of the Butte Natural Resource Damage program. The committee has met many times to “work the numbers” related to sources and volumes of water that might be available to flow in the future down a restored Silver Bow Creek.

The committee has adopted several basic premises to guide it. First, water commitments to a restored Silver Bow Creek will not be allowed to interfere with the economically important Montana Resources operations in any way. Second, median water flow for a restored Silver Bow Creek of 6 and 7 million gallons per day (MGPD) is needed to maintain a flow similar to the flow in Blacktail Creek.

Soon, nearly that much will have to be removed from the Berkeley Pit each day and treated. That treated water itself might be available for the creek or, if the treated Berkeley Pit water is needed in the Montana Resources operations, that would likely free up a similar amount from another current Montana Resources water source for the restored Silver Bow Creek.

The committee has looked for other sources beyond that and has documented a number of additional potential sources. Despite conventional wisdom or “street talk,” there is much more water available for a restored Silver Bow Creek than would ever be needed, according to Barrett. He indicates that the committee has identified as possible sources over 20 MGPD (in median flow) from various sources. A final report from the committee, when completed, will detail all those sources and volumes, along with any constraints that must be overcome.

Storm water Splashdown

The ROCC Storm water committee, chaired by Mary Kay Craig, focuses on two priorities: 1) discover new opportunities and locations for catchment basins and plants up on the Butte Hill in order to slow down, spread out and soak in storm water before it reaches the bottom of the Hill; and 2) find ways to divert more toxin-bearing storm water away from Silver Bow Creek.

Technologies that are already in use and are being expanded include strategically placed plantings that uptake metals; clean soil caps over exposed toxin-bearing land, curbs and gutters to direct storm water into storm drains where much of it goes to retention and catchment basins that can be cleaned out; and diversion drains that take storm water to the Berkeley pit.

Storm water Committee members include: Larry Curran, Northey Tretheway, Elizabeth Erickson, Evan Barrett, Pat Faren, Joe Griffin, David Williams, Ed Simonich, Ken Reick, Bill Macgregor, Robert Pal, Grant Mitman, Doug Coe, Mary Kay Craig. The committee is collaborating with all the stakeholders in the Butte Priority Soils Operable Unit (BPSOU) including: Eric Hassler, BSB, Tom Malloy, BSB, Nikia Greene, EPA, Robert Moler, EPA, Daryl Reed, DEQ, Padraig Cunneen, BNRC, John Metesh, MBMG, Loren Burmeister, BP–ARCO.

ROCC in 2017

ROCC will continue to engage the public through meetings, presentations, ROCC website and Facebook pages. If you would like to hear more about the Plan or would like to schedule a presentation contact us at restoreourcreek@gmail.com or contact spokesperson Northey Tretheway at 406–285–8667.