



MICHAEL CAST PHOTOS, MICHAEL.CAST@MTSTANDARD.COM

Operator Todd Burt walks away from his massive shovel in the Continental Pit at the Montana Resources open pit copper and molybdenum mine on Dec. 11, 2020.

Price of copper is up

Montana Resources has high hopes for 2021

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With the global price of copper on the rise, miners at Montana Resources expect a busy and prosperous 2021.

S&P Global Platts is predicting a copper price at \$3.50 per pound for 2021.

Mike McGivern, MR vice president of human resources, said he's optimistic for that kind of price, and that MR budgeted for \$3 per pound.

In recent days, prices have gone over \$3.65.

But MR just mines the ore.

"We have no control over the price. We get what we get and take what we take," McGivern said.

For MR, 2020 was a roller coaster of a year. Before the pandemic, a strong copper price was projected for 2020. In April, things weren't looking good at all. The average daily price was \$2.17, and hit low at \$2.10.

"Fortunately, in the last quarter, we saw a big upswing in copper prices," McGivern said.

By October the price averaged \$2.88 and rose to an average of \$3.08 in December.

Meanwhile, the pandemic was making life hard on the mine's workers.

"We're not a place where our employees can work from home. They're operating equipment or maintaining the equipment. There's very few employees that have the ability to work from home like much of America has that capability," McGivern said.

In the end of 2020, MR came out on top — making 25% more than budgeted for. The mine produced just under 64 million pounds of copper, 8.6 million pounds of molybdenum and 569,000 ounces of silver.

Success was achieved partly by finding ways to cut costs when the prices went low in spring, McGivern said.

Among McGivern's reasons to be hopeful in 2021 are that construction is back on the rise after a slump early in the pandemic, and with President Joe Biden in office, greener energy policy is likely on the way.

"We love electric cars," McGivern



Mark Thompson, vice president of environmental affairs at Montana Resources, left, and MR consultant Matt Vincent look out over the Berkeley Pit on Dec. 11. The Berkeley Pit is not part of the active mining operation.

said. "There's going to be a big push for electric cars, more wind power. All those things require copper. There'll be a high demand for copper if all those expectations or plans come true."

McGivern said growth in large, emerging economies also increases demand.

"You look at the growth of India or you look at the growth of Brazil," McGivern said, adding that as these massive populations use more cars and appliances, it benefits the copper price.

China, a huge consumer of copper, is always a factor as well.

Still, more than the price of copper affects MR's bottom line.

"The first thing we always keep an eye



McGivern



Standa

on is the price of power," McGivern said.

MR is the second largest consumer of electricity in the state of Montana, and greener energy policy may affect production of coal and fossil fuels.

The U.S. Energy Information Administration reported that though Montana has nearly one-third of the nation's estimated recoverable coal reserves, coal has been on the decline the last few years. Hydroelectric power plants provided around 40% of Montana's electricity generation in 2018, and wind provided just 8%.

McGivern said MR tries to buy its power five years out at a set price.

"Keeping a reliable, reasonable price

for power is key for the continued operation of this place," McGivern said. "The other thing that we always keep an eye on is the price of fuel. We realized excellent diesel fuel prices in 2020 and it helped the bottom line tremendously."

In 2020, MR ended up spending \$2.6 million less than what the company budgeted for fuel.

MR's new president, Montana Tech alumnus Jack Standa, plans to implement some technology efficiency programs at the mine, McGivern said.

Specifically, he's looking at how to use software to make mine haulage and mine shovels more efficient.

The mine will also increase the numbers of haul trucks operating during a shift to 13, up from 11 in 2020.

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"We love electric cars. There's going to be a big push for electric cars, more wind power. All those things require copper. There'll be a high demand for copper if all those expectations or plans come true."

Mike McGivern, MR vice president of human resources



MEAGAN THOMPSON, THE MONTANA STANDARD

The Forge Hotel and new Barclay's II Restaurant is under construction on Jan. 28 at the corner of Polk Street and Highway 1 in Anaconda.

SUPERFUND ECONOMICS

Shedding stigma; creating jobs

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In Butte and Anaconda, Superfund cleanup is foremost a matter of community health and safety. As agreements are settled and cleanup kicks into high gear, however, the two communities also stand to reap economic benefits. The 2020 Partial Consent Decree for the Anaconda Smelter NPL Site was entered in the federal district court of Montana on

Jan. 28, making it an enforceable order of the court — done and done, in other words.

Completion of the majority of the slag and stormwater remediation is expected by 2025, Anaconda-Deer Lodge Chief Executive Officer Bill Everett said.

With settlement funding secured from Atlantic Richfield, Anaconda is quickly turning its image from that of an old smelter town to a recreational basecamp.

To judge the economic benefits of Superfund in Anaconda, take a gander at the \$10 million Forge Hotel going up, \$3 million of which was paid for by Atlantic Richfield. Then there's the



Everett

for the next 25 years as result of the consent decree, Everett said.

The details for these projects and other economic development underway in Anaconda will be the focus next week's economic outlook package in the Standard.

The remediation work ahead will also lead to an employment

boom, Everett said.

"For the next several years you're going to be seeing literally hundreds of people working throughout our community to help clean up — whether it's the yard reclamation, whether it's up by the smokestack. And this summer, you're going to see a large team of individuals working the north hills of Anaconda. So all those are great paying jobs, with great benefits, and feed and facilitate a lot of families in our community," Everett said.

Meanwhile, the Butte Priority Soils Operable Unit Consent Decree became effective this past fall.

Joe Willauer, the executive director of the Butte Local Development Corp., already has his eye on the green to come. With funds from the \$150 cleanup deal, areas of mine waste will be remediated and turned into the Silver Bow Creek Conservation Area (SBCCA), a sprawling midtown creek corridor of ponds, parks, and a planned amphitheater.

"An amazing 'Welcome to Butte!' sign," said Willauer, envisioning what folks will behold when they turn into town from the interstate.

Construction of the SBCCA is slated to begin in 2022 with the majority of work completed by

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2026. With the immense work of remediation attached to the BP-SOU consent decree and other Superfund-related projects, Butte stands to shed some of the Superfund stigma and benefit economically as a result.

Though it's easy to assume cleaning up waste and building parks will raise property values and invite businesses to Butte, it's difficult to quantify the economic growth to expect from all the restoration plans.

Atlantic Richfield liability manager Josh Bryson points to a 2009 study conducted by the Montana Department of Resources and Conservation and the Montana Department of Labor and Industry titled, "An Estimation of Montana's Restoration Economy."

By using labor statistics, property tax information, and extensive interviews with project supervisors, the departments conducted an economic case study of the Silver Bow Creek Streamside Tailings project to determine the likely benefits of similar restoration projects like those taking place at Superfund sites in Butte and Anaconda now.

The study estimated that for every \$1 million put into a restoration project, \$2.59 million in total economic activity is generated, including 31.5 full-time jobs.

"It is a different project, but it's all related to the work we do in environmental reclamation and restoration. I think the underlying message is that there is going to be a return to the local economy, and it's just difficult to quantify. So we tried to find an established, published study that provided some kind of insight to what the return may be," Bryson said.

The study found the top three jobs generated by restoration were construction (highway, water-system, dirt-moving, general construction) at 35%, environmental consulting (environmental or engineering services) at 15%, and government (oversight, research, education) at 10%.

From 2003 to 2008, the compound annual employment growth rate for Montana jobs related to remediation was 10.3% compared to 2.1% for all industries.

More recent data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics shows that employment numbers in construction have steadily risen nationwide from



MEAGAN THOMPSON, THE MONTANA STANDARD

Josh Vincent, president of Water & Environmental Technologies, stands at the gate to the Parrot Tailings Waste Removal Project near the Butte Civic Center. The company is preparing for the next phase in the cleanup of the toxic soil that will begin in a few weeks.

2010 to 2020, increasing by 36% in that time period. After a brief slump during the pandemic, employment in construction is once again on the rise.

According to the EPA's Montana Redevelopment Profile, in 10 Montana Superfund sites surveyed as of 2019, 330 businesses and organizations operating on new-use Superfund land following cleanup accounted for \$785 million in annual sales, with 4,628 employees earning a total of \$228 million annually.

On 13 Montana Superfund sites surveyed by the EPA, property values had improved by a total of \$906 million as of 2018.

The BPSOU consent decree became effective on Nov. 16, 2020, and Atlantic Richfield is now obligated by law to follow through with the cleanup entailed within it.

Two local employers, Pioneer Technical Services and Trec Inc., have provided all engineering support to date, and will continue to work to complete the designs of the SBCCA by early 2022, Bryson said, adding that Land



Hassler

Design Inc. of Billings has provided planning, landscape design and landscape architecture services to coordinate the end land use with remedy, and to develop the SBCCA master plan.

Of the 75 employees supporting the investigation and design phase — technicians, scientists, engineers, architects — 53 reside in Butte and surrounding areas, Bryson said, adding that those numbers don't include Atlantic Richfield employees.

"I was kind of taken aback a little bit when I saw the numbers of how many people have contributed and continue to contribute to this project," Bryson said.

The construction phase will bring on a whole other level of employment — contractors, laborers, health and safety supervisors, traffic control personnel, equipment operators, truck drivers — the list goes on.

Over 800,000 cubic yards of

waste will be removed from the center of town, followed by installation of remedial components — subgrade infrastructure, naturalized stormwater basins and channels, and a system to treat groundwater — in addition to the SBCCA's parks.

"I believe it's safe to say that at any given time we will have dozens of personnel actively working in the field," Bryson said.

The bids for the construction phase are expected to be issued to pre-qualified contractors in early summer of 2022, Bryson said, adding that in addition to Trec and Pioneer providing consulting services, Atlantic Richfield also has a longstanding relationship with local contractors including Jordan Contracting and Wasley Excavating.

"There's going to be national interest on this project," Bryson said, adding that it's possible contractors from outside the area would attempt to partner with local contractors. "We'll look to the best qualified, and we consider our local contractors extremely well-qualified."

"We think that the success of the project really lies in utilizing local resources for efficiency purposes and experience purposes," Bryson said.

The long-term operation and maintenance of sites in the SBCCA is still being negotiated in the final Allocation Agreement between Atlantic Richfield and Butte-Silver Bow, Bryson said.

"We (Atlantic Richfield) expect to operate and maintain the sites ourselves for a little bit of time until we can fully determine what the necessary resources in funding are going to be required to do that in the long-term," Bryson said.

Eric Hassler, director of Butte-Silver Bow's Superfund Department, said, "Our Allocation Agreement is in place to ensure that the taxpayers aren't covering the costs of the long-term O&M (operations and maintenance) activities associated with remedy."

A 2015 study by the National Recreation and Parks Association

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Hospitals persevere, grow

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In most fields, the pandemic meant business really slowed down.

Not so in healthcare. Even as hospitals lost revenue from the interruption of elective procedures, they also shouldered the grave and awesome responsibility of doing everything possible to keep us alive when the virus was doing its best to kill us.

Suffice it to say, 2020 was an incredibly challenging year for all the hospitals in southwest Montana — but they managed to persevere, take care of their communities and, in many cases, innovate at the same time.

Jay Doyle, CEO of St. James Healthcare, said that through it all, St. James has kept an eye on the future.

“We’ve invested a lot in technology this year,” he said, pointing to advanced robotics that advance care in spine surgery, gynecology, urology and other surgical procedures. “The advantage is precision,” he said. “The physicians can use these tools to make procedures safer and more precise.”

St. James is doing much to improve its physical structure. The main part of the hospital was built in the 1950s, and so renovation has been an ongoing process. The Labor and Delivery area on the fourth floor is brand new and completely renovated. And within a few weeks, the hospital’s Cath Lab will be more than doubled in size, allowing emergency treatments to be done without competing with other complex procedures that may be going on at the same time.



Doyle



PROVIDED PHOTO

St. James Healthcare’s cath lab team, from left, Stacey Sheehan, Brianna Crippen, Kaysie Aguilar, Katie Haxby, Noelle Coates. (Not pictured: Deanna Montoya, Kim Roepe, Kelli Bush, and Jennifer Muffich.)



Amy Reisenauer, assistant director of nursing, and Jamie Johnson, chief nursing officer, prepare a vaccination dose Thursday at Community Hospital of Anaconda.

The expansion, made possible by the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust, will im-

prove outcomes and help physicians provide quality care, Doyle said. As with any hospital,

physicians are at the heart of the hospital’s ability to provide excellent care. St. James is very happy, Doyle said, to have recruited several more outstanding physicians over the past year, including:

- Dr. Collette Chrony, a pediatrician;
- Dr. Danika Clark, a primary care physician;
- And two obstetrician/gynecologists, Dr. Jacob Christians and Dr. Susan Marik.

Also new in 2020 was Dr. Jennifer Davenport, an interventional pediatric cardiologist by trade who joined St. James as its medical director.

At Community Hospital of Anaconda, physician recruitment is also a big priority, according to CEO JoEllen Villa and Chief Financial Officer Meg Hickley-Boynton.

“CHA is proud of our



Villa

ability to recruit and retain quality providers,” the two said in a statement, pointing out that CHA’s emergency room is staffed with board-eligible or board-certified providers, including some who have been with the hospital for more than a decade.

New providers at CHA

include:

- Dr. Siddy Atilano and Dr. Andy Bognanno, both obstetrician/gynecologists;
- Dr. Bridgette Baker, family medicine;
- Dr. Christina Ottomeyer, orthopedics and spine surgery;
- Dr. Sheena Ray and Dr. Sarah Mullenwey, both adult psychiatrists.

“CHA expanded surgical services in 2020, including Pintler Orthopedics and Spine. With the addition of Dr. Ottomeyer, Drs.

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LEFT: Jillian Acosta, a nurse at Madison Valley Medical Center, dons the personal protective gear she needs to wear before entering an isolation room for a COVID-positive patient at the Ennis hospital. **RIGHT:** Barrett Hospital & HealthCare in Dillon.

Gus Varnavas, Carl Schillhammer, Jonathan Pine and Thomas McMahon will serve patients at their Butte and Anaconda offices, treating patients with spine and orthopedic conditions.

“We are also keenly focused on providing access to behavioral health services for Anaconda and our surrounding areas, as evidenced by ... expansion of our behavioral health support staff,” Villa and Hickey-Boynton added.

For Doyle at St. James, one thing that made navigating 2020 more successful was increased collaboration with regional hospitals including Barrett Hospital & Healthcare in Dillon; Ruby Valley Medical Center in Sheridan; Deer Lodge Medical Center; and Madison Valley Medical Center in Ennis.

“The presidents and CEOs get together,” Doyle said, “and more and more the doctors are getting to know each other and build relationships.”

“At St. James we want to make sure that we help the other regional hospitals care for their patients at those hospitals whenever that’s possible, and then be here for them if they need to bring them to us.”

One of the ways that works is with physician recruitment, Doyle says. “If one hospital has a part-time need in an area and we can augment that, it means recruiting another physician.”

Landon Dybdal, CEO at Ruby Valley Medical Center, echoed Doyle’s sentiments.

“They have done a fantastic job reaching out to rural hospitals in the area,” Dybdal said.

“Jay has been great to work with,” he said Friday. “I called him on something at 7 last night, and he was there for me. And St. James is a wonderful partner. We try to give our patients the very best care possible, but when they need a more advanced level of care it’s good to know we have St. James close by.”

Doyle says St. James is excited about building a new primary-care walk-in clinic in the 3600 block of Harrison Avenue next to Staples. The clinic should be open in late fall of this year, he said. “We’re running out of clinic space here, and it made sense to build there, near where many people live.”

St. James also has a pri-



Landon Dybdal, the chief executive officer of Ruby Valley Medical Center, is pictured in the lobby of the facility located in Sheridan in this August 2019 file photo.

MEAGAN THOMPSON PHOTOS, THE MONTANA STANDARD

mary-care clinic in Boulder. The clinic was run by St. Peter’s Healthcare in Helena for years and when St. Peter’s stepped out of it, St. James stepped in to manage it, then a couple of years ago acquired it outright. It’s part of a commitment the hospital has made to be a care provider for all of Jefferson County, which does not have a major medical center.

While the “surge” of COVID-19 came later in Butte than in many other places, it came with a vengeance in the fall. Both St.

James and CHA were sorely tested; both came through for their communities.

CHA’s Villa and Hickey-Boynton said the pandemic “has had a significant impact on CHA’s providers, staff and patients.” They added that “Of great concern is the choice by individuals to defer both preventative care and ongoing care for current health conditions. The significance of this is already having an impact, with patients presenting for care either very ill or with conditions that could have been caught and

treated much earlier in the disease process.”

Doyle said St. James has seen similar issues.

“We’re trying to get the message to people that if you need care, please come,” he said. “We don’t want people having symptoms and waiting too long to come in. In fact, in terms of COVID, there’s probably no safer place you could be

than here.”

Ruby Valley’s Dybdal said the hospital had some rough months financially in 2020 because of the virus, “but things are beginning to look a lot better. We’re headed in the right direction now.”

He expressed a worry about getting people in his community vaccinated. “We’re not getting the

number of vaccine doses that we want,” he said. “It’s comforting to know that it’s not just us, everybody’s going through it, but it’s a big challenge.”

He’s excited about a new ultrasound machine which will save many patients from having to travel farther for diagnostics – a key factor especially in the wintertime.

While physician recruitment hasn’t been as big a challenge there as in some hospitals – “We’ve had good retention here. We have solid providers who want to stay here,” he said – nurse recruitment is another story.

“That’s been a lot tougher,” he said. Right now with what’s going on traveling nurses are commanding a premium.

“We had a nurse we were trying to recruit who got an offer in Texas for double what we could pay,” he said.

Overall, though, the Sheridan hospital has come through the crisis in good shape. “The community support this facility gets is just amazing,” Dybdal said.

Doyle feels the same way about the St. James’ relationship with Butte.

“Butte is poised for a lot of growth,” said Doyle, who should know – Both he’s president of the board of the Butte Local

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Superfund

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tion found that Montana parks generated 1,610 jobs annually and \$165.5 million in statewide economic activity.

A \$20.5 million-portion of consent decree funds will be used by the state of Montana to complete remediation of the Blacktail Creek project area, with remaining surplus from that effort going to other restoration action in Butte. Included is \$1 million earmarked for restoring the upper Silver Bow Creek corridor, Bryson said.

The restoration of upper Silver Bow Creek is a major priority for community groups like the Restore Our Creek Coalition.

Atlantic Richfield is looking into ways to quantify the social and economic benefits of the BPSOU consent decree projects to the community, Bryson said.

Butte-Silver Bow has long utilized funds from Allocation Agreements with Atlantic Richfield to run its Superfund Division, now the Superfund Department, and the Residential Metals Abatement Program. The recent expansion of RMAP adds 8,000 residential properties eligible for assessment of contaminants, and remediation if necessary.

Hassler said the expansion will potentially lead to the hire of four or more RMAP crew members.

Superfund Advisory and Redevelopment Trust Authority (SARTA) grants are funded by Atlantic Richfield and administered by a local volunteer board to programs and projects that redevelop



MONTANA STANDARD FILE PHOTO

Atlantic Richfield's Josh Bryson, left, answers questions from Timber Butte residents Theresa Conway and Steve Jaksha in this February 2020 photo.

properties affected by past mining activities, provide infrastructure improvements to maintain or improve remedies, and promote growth in re-use land within the BPSOU. Additionally, the funds are used toward local festivals.

Julia Crain, assistant director of the B-SB Superfund Department, said that the SARTA board continues to meet and administer grants from previous years, but has not announced whether there will be a grant cycle for the 2021-2022 fiscal year. In the forthcoming year, the board will decide when the next funding availability will be, Crain said.

Another big restoration effort in Butte, the Parrot Tailings Waste Removal Project, is about to break ground on Phase 2.

The project, which removes heavily contaminated waste material and water from the area around the Civic Center, is funded by damages to natural resources paid to the state of Montana by Atlantic Richfield.

Phase 1 of the removal is complete, and the work continues to put much of the \$36 million budget back into the local economy.

Markovich Construction of Butte was awarded the \$14 million contract to construct new Butte-Silver Bow vehicle and maintenance shops off Beef Trail Road, because the old shops lay atop material that still needs to be



Willauer

removed.

Jim Ford, Montana's Natural Resource Damage Program project manager for the Parrot project, said the new shops should be done by Feb. 8, and demolition of the old shops and subsequent waste removal begins on March 1.

Butte firm Intermountain Construction Services won the Phase 2 contract with the lowest bid of just under \$7 million.

In addition to the local employment gained, when the work is done, Butte Silver-Bow will own two new parcels of land prime for development in the center of town, Ford said.

BLDC's Willauer said one of the great economic benefits to come out of Superfund is the local expertise Butte's achieved in restoration. He's talking about the work of consultant firms like Water and Environmental Technologies (WET) and Pioneer, central to countless restoration efforts like the Parrot project.

"Yeah, we're a Superfund site. But as a result of that we've also created world-class technologies for environmental remediation from both the private sector and then of course the work that's done up at Tech," he said.

On Wednesday, Ford and WET president Josh Vincent virtually updated members of the Butte Natural Resource Damage Restoration Council on the Parrot project. Afterward, technical consultants, various government players, Bryson, and interested community members hashed out a few tiny details in the vast restoration to come. Discussion turned from Parrot to Blacktail Creek, to Northside Tailings, to Diggings East – just a few of the many plots in dire need of remediation.

The long, grueling road ahead reared its ugly face. The complexity of the projects and the many unknowns rose to the surface. But experts committed to cleaning up the daunting mess calmly discussed the best seed mix in waste capping technology, the layers of waste in the geological strata, the paths contaminated groundwater might take.

The future economics of the matter took a back seat to the scheduling of the now. At the end of the meeting, BNRC chair Elizabeth Erickson thanked everyone for their time.

"We're just ready to get going on this thing," she said.

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ABOUT THE BUTTE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

The BLDC is focused on growing entrepreneurship and employment opportunities, increasing population and tax base, and assisting our existing businesses to grow and compete in a global economy. We do this by providing high-quality services and programs designed to make relocation, expansion, or start-up as smooth as possible. The BLDC has an impressive portfolio of loan programs that, when coupled with business development assistance services, create a winning combination for businesses. The BLDC works closely with Butte's and Montana's other economic development organizations to package services specifically to meet your business needs. The Butte Local Development Corporation, working with our members and partners, have helped create or retain over 4,591 jobs!

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Hospitals

From D5

Development Corp. “And we’re in an increasingly good position to serve a growing community.”

Both St. James and CHA have garnered a great deal of recognition within the healthcare industry.

St. James received the American College of Cardiology’s Chest Pain—MI Silver Performance Achievement Award for 2020, one of only 124 hospitals nationwide to receive the honor.

Also, the hospital won A ratings in both 2019 rating periods from Leapfrog Group.

In Anaconda, CHA received:
 ■ The 2020 Performance Leadership Award for Top Quartile Performance in Outcomes, awarded by The Chartis Center for Rural Health, in partnership with the National Organization

of State Offices of Rural Health;
 ■ The 2020 Performance Leadership Award for Top Quartile Performance in Quality, from the same organization;
 ■ 2020 Top 100 Critical Access Hospital, also awarded by the Chartis Center for Rural Health. (This award was also won by Barrett Hospital & Healthcare in Dillon);
 ■ Montana Rural Healthcare Performance Improvement Network’s Quality Improvement Award for CHA’s work on Improving Patient Care & Safety by Improving Readmission Rates.

Pictured here in this August 2019 file photo is the emergency room at the new Ruby Valley Medical Center in Sheridan.

MEAGAN THOMPSON,
 THE MONTANA STANDARD



Copper

From D1

MR is budgeted to add four new employees for a total of 378 this year, McGivern said.

Received in 2019, the mine’s

tailoring impoundment permit for a 50-foot lift typically holds about 10 years of tailings, McGivern said. MR will begin working on the next permit this year.

The mine life goes out 40 years, he said.

MR continues to buy and em-

ploy locally. Most of the workforce is from Butte, the rest from surrounding areas like Anaconda, Whitehall and Philipsburg.

The final phase of MR and the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation’s \$10 million donation to Stodden Park should

be completed in 2021. The clubhouse is almost finished, and irrigation and improvement of the golf course is on the way, McGivern said.

In 2020, MR made almost \$22 million in Butte-Silver Bow purchases, paid over \$9 million in

property and gross proceeds taxes in the county, made \$10 million in Montana purchases, and paid over \$4 million in metal mine taxes to the state.

“We have an operating policy – if we can buy local, we buy local,” McGivern said.



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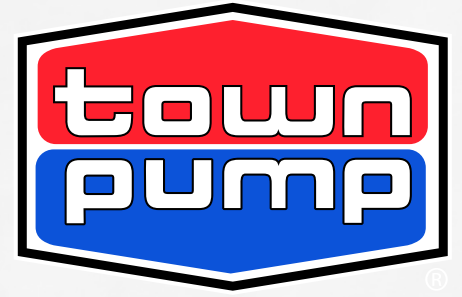
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