**Stillwater Mining Company**

**East Boulder Mine Amendment 004**

**Expansion EIS #61385**

Dear Mr. Grosvenor and Mr. Jones,

I am writing this letter in **overwhelming support** of Stillwater Mining Company (SMC), East Boulder Mine Amendment 004 Expansion EIS #61385. SMC has an impeccable Environmental record and not only meets the environmental regulations but also goes well above and beyond. This is evident though the State-of-the-Art Mine Sites (small footprint) and the Columbus Processing Facility.

Stillwater Mining Company has always been transparent with the regulatory agencies, communities where they operate in and the Environmental Concerned Citizen groups. This transparency is evident with the Good Neighbor Agreement (GNA), which was established in 2000, between SMC and Northern Plains Resources Council, Stillwater Protective Association and Cottonwood Resources Council. The collaboration within the GNA has provided a framework to ensure that responsible economic development occurs. Within the GNA, the “council” using third-party technical advisors, have a say on how the mine operates to ensure implementation of best practices to minimize and mitigate impacts. This includes reviewing and commenting on all design documents related to the Waste Rock Storage and Tailing Treatment Storage facility. Prior to submitting the EIS the GNA provided input on the location and design of the new Tailing Storage Facility and Waste Rock Storage area. This “above and beyond” approach by the Mine, to work with independent interest groups by hearing their concerns and modifying the design, as agreed upon, ensures that the safest and environmental sound design is constructed. The following key design factors were considered:

* Extensive environmental baseline studies
* Design minimizes surface disturbance
* Aligns with international best practices on tailing management
* Includes geosynthetic lining system and a basin underdrain system
* Designed to withstand the Maximum Credible Earthquake 7.5 Magnitude
* Designed to withstand the Probable Maximum Flood: 47 inches of precipitation in a 24-hour period.

As far as filter tailings, I support the conclusion from the Custer Gallatin National Forest subject matter experts and Montana Department of Environmental Quality in their conclusion that the “studies conducted to date have not established the feasibility of producing a geotechnically stable filtered tailings product that can be transported and placed in a Filter Tailings Storage Facility that will remain free-standing and stable, and would result in a reduction in environmental risk.” SMC and its stakeholders have partnered to research alternative tailings storage facility technologies, including filtered tailings/dry stacking, for more than 20 years. The extensive research supports the agencies’ conclusion. Given this conclusion on filter tailings, the safe feasible option continues to be the proposed TSF in the Expansion EIS.

Given the safety and design factors that have been considered, *I asked the agency to approve Major Amendment 4 and disregard the “noise” of those that say there is a danger from a treatment storage facility failure*.

How important is SMC is to Montana and the United States? One only needs to look at what is being mined, platinum and palladium. These metals are critical to national security, economic prosperity, provides stable supply chain and provides regional jobs and growth. The economic contributions that SMC provides to Montana is critical. For example, over $6 billion in economic output, $15 million in annual local taxes, and $5 million in metal mines license taxes to name a few. Without the mine, good jobs are hard to find to support a family and the communities positively impacted from the mine.

As far as a global environmental impact, mining done in America reduces the overall impact given the stringent environmental regulations. If it is not done in America, then this critical resource will be mined in other countries and the environmental impact will significantly increase. Each individual or group that comments on this EIS utilizes something today that contains this critical metal. Such as vehicles, that contain catalytic converters which cleans the air from vehicle exhaust. We need to make sure for the common good, that this resource is mined as safe and environmentally friendly as possible. By mining in Montana, we do just that!

On a personal note, SMC has allows me to live and raise my family in Montana and make a good income. I, like many other Stillwater Employees love the outdoors of Montana and would not support a mining operation that could impact “our” way of life. SMC has shown for many years that it can and will do it right.

I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the public process and all the hard work that has gone into a thorough analysis. Approval is vital to continued operations at the East Boulder Mine and the Columbus Processing Facility. This approval is beneficial for our rural communities, Montana, and the country.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kevin MItchum

Kevin Mitchum