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Comments: My wife and I have lived on the East Boulder Road since 2006. We were aware of the mine and its operations when we purchased our property. We had no objections to the mine or mining in general then, nor do we now. Mining is an integral part of civilization. However, the proposed increase in the scale of the local mine causes us considerable concern. The sought-after expansion is enormous and the strain on operational safety is obvious.

Living next to the East Boulder River, we are very aware of seasonal changes. Even without a weather incident, a failure of the proposed expansion of the mines' facility would ruin our property and quite conceivably kill us. We have seen and read the maps. The mine told us that such a failure is nearly impossible, so remote that they have refused to consider rudimentary warning systems. From reading their own studies and literature, we can see that if even the best of warning systems were in place, we would have only minutes to make the only escape possible; uphill and afoot, not a quick or easy task when you're in your mid-seventies.

There is considerable information about failures of mine tailings facilities. The DEQ, CGNF and Sibanye Stillwater Limited are certainly aware of the nature and cause of those failures. Consequently, they also know that the number of failures has grown both in quantity, damage and loss of life. The epic failure in Brazil is just one example. I am convinced that no holding facility is foolproof and given enough time, ALL of them will fail. Some of that conviction results from, talking with owners/operators of industries that use holding areas for liquid or semi-liquid waste.

Our concern is not limited to our life span, and not just to the life span of our heirs, but for ages to come. Sibanye Stillwater has stated that if their holding facility fails, they will abandon the mine. They would also abandon Sweet Grass County. I am aware of the legal and financial obligations the mine has for cleanup. They are not even a small fraction of what would be required, and the toxic waste would last for eons.

As I wrote above, the mine is a mainstay of our local civilization and any failure would be a human and natural disaster of Biblical proportions for the entire area we live in, not just a financial setback for the shareholders of Sibanye Stillwater Limited. There is a method called dry-stacking. Again, I am sure the mine management and ownership are aware of that option of dealing with the waste the mine produces. It is more expensive than the present proposed methods and facility, but it would be a long-term solution and guarantee that everyone could accept, albeit with somewhat reduced dividends and profit.

As far as I know, Sibanye Stillwater Limited has never even mentioned, let alone considered dry-stacking as a way to insure the long-term operation of the mine and the near absolute safety of residents who live next to the East Boulder, Main Boulder and Yellowstone rivers. Sibanye Stillwater Limited has not listened to us. Helpful as they are, providing a free lunch or two, some irrigation head gates, considerable tax revenue and a few college scholarships, does not solve the long-term needs of the community. Perhaps they will listen to you and institute a safe, viable and profitable solution. If the mines' proposal is accepted as currently presented, this issue will become an ugly, national, anti-mining campaign that sets neighbor against neighbor and creates a vicious political battle that will damage everyone concerned.