

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 8/7/2023 10:19:00 PM

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Mr. Grosvenor and Mr. Jones,

I would like to thank the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, Custer Gallatin National Forest (CGNF) and the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) for preparing the East Boulder Mine Amendment 004 Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

I am an employee of Sibanye-Stillwater residing in south-central Montana and the Agencies' decision on this permit would directly affect me. I respectfully request that the Agencies consider the following comments.

First and foremost, I support the Stillwater Mining Company's proposal for new tailings and waste rock storage facilities at the East Boulder Mine. The Stillwater Mining Company has proven over the past four decades that mining in Montana can be done sustainably and responsibly. Both platinum and palladium are on the United States Geological Survey's 2022 critical minerals list. As a global leader in Platinum Group Metal (PGM) production and recycling, as well as the only primary producer of PGMs in the United States, it is essential to our local communities, the State of Montana, and our country that the agencies approve SMC's application.

Having grown up in a mining community I've witnessed first hand the impact of losing a major employer of the area. I was also a part of a mine closure in north eastern Washington where the mine itself accounted for almost 30% of the jobs in the county. Losing a substantial employer destroys small communities. The loss of tax revenue, the loss of donations from the mines to local schools, the money getting put back into small businesses from employees and families in the area. Besides the things that directly affect us now, when there are no more metals being pulled out of the ground, there is no more anything. Think of the things that you use in a day that are made of metal. It's not just laying on the ground and then you make stuff out of it. You have to mine it. And better to mine it in the US where there are strict rules in place for safe mining practices and government guidelines on reclamation and water treatment for years after mine closure.

I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the public process and appreciate your thorough analysis. If approved, continued operations at the East Boulder Mine is beneficial for our rural communities, Montana, and our country.

Respectfully,

Kyle Kurtz