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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 believe Sibanye-Stillwater's position as the only primary producer of critical minerals platinum and palladium, as well as one of the largest global recyclers of platinum, palladium, and rhodium is important to our national security and supply chain independence. 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.

As identified in the Draft EIS, the Department of Interior's United States Geological Survey has identified PGMs are identified as "critical minerals." The Draft EIS should analyze the socioeconomic indirect effects to national security and the vulnerabilities of supply-chain disruptions under the No Action Alternative.

Through the Good Neighbor Agreement, Sibanye-Stillwater and the GNA Councils have collaborated for more than two decades to balance the need for positive rural economic development while minimizing impacts on the physical and human environments. Through this collaborative arrangement, they have developed standards that exceed state and federal standards. Please consider acknowledging that the use of these best current available technologies, including water treatment, air quality control measures, and traffic and housing limitations, have created benefits for our communities, while limited the impacts on our environment.

I believe that the Agencies considered and analyzed a reasonable range of alternatives, including the geomorphic reclamation of the Lewis Gulch TSF and the Dry Fork WRSA, described in Alternative 3.

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,

Brandon Kerkes