

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 8/8/2023 5:24:02 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 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.

Sibanye-Stillwater is the lifeblood of our communities in south-central Montana. The company provides excellent paying jobs for nearly 2,000 residents across multiple counties and ultimately contributes over \$6 billion in economic output to Montana. If Amendment 004 is not approved, operations at the East Boulder Mine could not continue beyond 2025. Sibanye-Stillwater has proven PGM ore reserves until 2062. If the East Boulder Mine discontinued operations, close to four decades of socioeconomic benefits and growth opportunities would be lost. Sibanye-Stillwater's property taxes and metal mines license taxes represent over half of Sweet Grass County's revenue. I understand that Sweet Grass County would lose nearly \$8 million per year if operations were to cease in five years. This would be a significant adverse impact and should be disclosed as such. As identified in the Draft EIS, the Department of Interior's United States Geological Survey has identified PGMs 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.

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,

Jessica Wicks