

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 6/16/2026 8:49:08 AM

First name: Meryl

Last name: Pinque

Organization:

Title:

Comments: To the Montana Department of Environmental Quality and the Custer Gallatin National Forest,

I am writing to formally oppose the proposed Amendment 014 to Operating Permit 00118 and the federal Stillwater Mine Plan of Operations, which would extend the mine's operational life by up to 42 years.

This proposal raises profound and unacceptable environmental concerns:

1. **WASTE STORAGE EXPANSION:** The proposed infrastructure improvements are designed primarily to increase waste storage capacity. Expanding toxic mine tailings storage over a multi-decade horizon poses severe and long-term risks to surrounding ecosystems, watersheds, and groundwater in the Stillwater River corridor - one of Montana's most ecologically sensitive areas.

2. **CLIMATE AND CARBON FOOTPRINT:** Authorizing 42 additional years of industrial mining operations is fundamentally incompatible with state, federal, and international commitments to reduce industrial emissions and transition toward a sustainable economy. The cumulative carbon cost of such an extension has not been adequately assessed.

3. **IMPACT ON BIODIVERSITY:** The Custer Gallatin National Forest is home to critical wildlife habitat, including grizzly bear and bull trout populations. Decades of continued heavy industrial activity will fragment habitat, increase noise and light pollution, and accelerate the degradation of riparian zones that cannot be adequately mitigated.

4. **BURDEN ON FUTURE GENERATIONS:** A 42-year operational extension effectively locks in an environmentally destructive land use for the next two generations, foreclosing more sustainable alternatives and creating long-lasting remediation liabilities that taxpayers and local communities will ultimately bear.

I urge the DEQ and CGNF to conduct a rigorous, transparent, and independent Environmental Impact Statement that fully accounts for cumulative impacts, climate costs, and irreversible ecological harm. I further urge both agencies to give serious weight to alternatives that do not involve expanding waste storage or extending the mine's operational footprint.

The burden of proof must rest with the proponents of this amendment to demonstrate that it will cause no significant environmental harm - not with the public to prove otherwise.

Thank you for considering this comment.

Respectfully,

Meryl Pinque