



**United States
Department of
Agriculture**

**Forest
Service**

Custer National Forest

**1310 Main Street
Billings, MT 59105**

Gallatin National Forest

**10 E Babcock Avenue
Bozeman, MT 59771**



**Montana Department of
Environmental Quality**

**PO Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620-0901**

File Code: 1950

Date: June 14, 2012

Dear Interested Party:

The Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), the Custer National Forest (CNF), and the Gallatin National Forest (GNF) have completed the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Stillwater Mining Company's Revised Water Management Plans and Boe Ranch LAD. You may obtain electronic versions of these documents by accessing either the Montana DEQ's web site at <http://deq.mt.gov/eis.mcp> or by accessing the Custer (<http://www.fs.usda.gov/custer>) or Gallatin (<http://www.fs.usda.gov/gallatin>) National Forest's web site. You may request a hard copy document or an electronic document by contacting either of the agency contacts below.

Kristi Ponozzo
Montana Department of Environmental
Quality
P.O. Box 200901, Helena, MT 59601
kponozzo@mt.gov
406-444-2813

Patrick Pierson
Custer National Forest
1310 Main Street, Billings, MT 59105 or
ppierson@fs.fed.us
406-255-1441 ext. 213

The Stillwater Mine and the East Boulder Mine are existing underground mines located near Nye, Montana, and south of Big Timber, Montana, respectively. Both mines produce platinum group metals. The Stillwater Mining Company (SMC) submitted applications in late 2000 to the DEQ, CNF, and GNF to amend its operation permits for these two mines. The purpose of SMC's proposed revisions are twofold: 1) to develop and implement closure and post-closure water management plans for adit water, tailings impoundments, and storm water for the Stillwater and East Boulder mines; and 2) to construct and operate a pipeline and land application disposal (LAD) system at SMC's Boe Ranch property, if needed, to dispose of treated adit and tailings waters from the East Boulder Mine during operations and at closure.

Public review and comment was solicited on the Draft EIS, and utilized in the preparation of this final EIS. This Final EIS analyzes SMC's proposed revisions as well as agency-proposed modifications to the revised water management plans (e.g., reclamation cover requirements, reclamation cap design, use of biological treatment systems for treatment of undiluted tailings



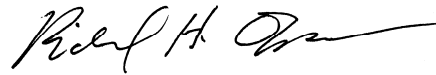
water at closure, and post-closure water routing and channel design). The major federal and state actions include the approval of all necessary permits to implement the revised water management plans, including construction and operation. Nine alternatives (3 No Action Alternatives, 3 Proposed Action Alternatives, and 3 Agency-Mitigated Alternatives) are analyzed in detail. The Preferred Alternatives are 3A, 3B, and 3C, all Agency Mitigated Alternatives.

The Record of Decision (ROD) for Stillwater Mining Company's Revised Water Management Plans and Boe Ranch LAD project will be issued approximately 30 days from the publication of the Notice of Availability of the Final EIS (40 CFR 1506.10). Notice of the decision will be published in the *Billings Gazette* and the *Bozeman Chronicle*, the respective papers of record for the two National Forests involved. Instructions to file an appeal will be described in the ROD and published in the legal notice of the decision.

Sincerely,



Mary C. Erickson, Forest Supervisor
Gallatin and Custer National Forests



Richard H. Opper, Director
Montana Department of Environmental Quality

enclosure

