

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
Permitting and Compliance Division
Air and Waste Management Bureau
1520 East Sixth Avenue
P.O. Box 200901, Helena, Montana 59620-0901
(406) 444-3490

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA)

Issued For: Stillwater Mining Company
HC 54, Box 365
Nye, MT 59061

RECEIVED

JUL 07 1998

**ENVIRONMENTAL
QUALITY COUNCIL**

Permit Number: 2635-06

Preliminary Determination on Permit Issued: 7/2/98
Department Decision on Permit Issued:
Final Permit Issued:

Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) Compliance: An environmental assessment required by MEPA was completed for this project as follows.

Legal Description of Site: The facility is located in Section 27, Township 2 South, Range 20 East, in Stillwater County, Montana.

Description of Project: The permit application is for the addition of a second smelting circuit for platinum group metals and associated equipment.

Benefits and Purpose of Proposal: The proposed system will allow Stillwater Mining Company to smelt additional concentrate.

Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider: None available.

A listing and appropriate evaluation of mitigation, stipulations and other controls enforceable by the agency or another government agency: A listing of the enforceable permit conditions and a permit analysis, including a Best Available Control Technology analysis, is contained in permit #2635-06.

Description and analysis of regulatory impacts on private property rights: The department has considered alternatives to the conditions imposed in this permit as part of the permit development. The department has determined the permit conditions are reasonably necessary to ensure compliance with applicable requirements and demonstrate compliance with those requirements and do not unduly restrict private property rights.

Potential Impact on Physical Environment							
		Major	Moderate	Minor	None	Unknown	Comments Included
1	Terrestrial and Aquatic Life and Habitats			X			yes
2	Water Quality, Quantity and Distribution				X		yes
3	Geology and Soil Quality, Stability and Moisture			X			yes
4	Vegetation Cover, Quantity and Quality			X			yes
5	Aesthetics			X			yes
6	Air Quality			X			yes
7	Unique Endangered, Fragile or Limited Environmental Resource			X			yes
8	Demands on Environmental Resource of Water, Air and Energy			X			yes
9	Historical and Archaeological Sites			X			yes
10	Cumulative and Secondary Impacts			X			yes

Potential Impact on Human Environment							
		Major	Moderate	Minor	None	Unknown	Comments Included
1	Social Structures and Mores				X		yes
2	Cultural Uniqueness and Diversity				X		yes
3	Local and State Tax Base and Tax Revenue				X		yes
4	Agricultural or Industrial Production				X		yes
5	Human Health			X			yes
6	Access to and Quality of Recreational and Wilderness Activities				X		yes
7	Quantity and Distribution of Employment			X			yes
8	Distribution of Population				X		yes
9	Demands for Government Services				X		yes
10	Industrial and Commercial Activity			X			yes
11	Locally Adopted Environmental Plans and Goals				X		yes
12	Cumulative and Secondary Impacts			X			yes

Potential Impact on Physical Environment

1. Terrestrial and Aquatic Life and Habitats

This permitting action will result in an increase in emissions at the facility. Minor impacts to the habitats of fish and wildlife may occur. Habitat impacts could result in a change in the diversity or abundance of terrestrial or aquatic life.

2. Water Quality, Quantity and Distribution

The actions addressed in this permit will not result in a change in the amount or characteristics of surface water discharged or the alteration of the course or magnitude of any drainage system. This action does not result in a change in the quality or quantity of ground water. Therefore, no impact to water quality, quantity and distribution is anticipated.

3. Geology and Soil Quality, Stability and Moisture

The actions addressed will not change the soil stability or geologic substructure. However, the project may have minor impacts that result in the increased disruption, displacement, erosion, and compaction near the site. The proposed changes are not anticipated to result in impacts to productivity or fertility at or near the site. No unique geologic or physical features will be disturbed. Therefore, only minor impacts to geology and soil quality, stability and moisture are anticipated.

4. Vegetation Cover, Quantity and Quality

The increase in regulated pollutants may result in minor impacts to the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species.

5. Aesthetics

The proposed system in the permit application will result in new equipment. However, the additional equipment is not anticipated to alter any scenic vista or create an aesthetically offensive site or effect.

6. Air Quality

The allowable SO₂ and PM-10 emissions from the facility are permitted to increase; therefore, minor impacts from greater regulated pollutants, as a result of this permit, are possible. However, the allowable emissions are within the National Ambient Air Quality Standards and Montana Ambient Air Quality Standards.

7. Unique Endangered, Fragile or Limited Environmental Resources

This permitting action may result in minor impacts to terrestrial and aquatic life and/or their habitat; therefore, it is possible that unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species may experience minor impacts.

8. Demands on Environmental Resource of Water, Air and Energy

The department does not anticipate that this permitting action will impose impacts to water. Additional energy may be required at the facility; therefore, minor impacts to energy resources are anticipated. Minor demands on air resources are possible because the facility's emissions will be increasing.

9. Historical and Archaeological Sites

Based on information from the Montana Historical Society, there are five previously recorded historical sites in the Columbus area. They include a historic road, 3 historic commercial buildings, and a historic residence. These known sites should not be impacted by the changed proposed in this permit. No cultural resource inventories have been recorded in the area. Stillwater Mining Company is responsible to ensure that historical and archaeological sites are preserved.

10. Cumulative and Secondary Impacts

Minor cumulative and secondary impacts as a result of the allowable emissions increases in addition to the facilities current emissions are possible. Minor cumulative and secondary impacts to terrestrial and aquatic habitats and air quality are possible.

Potential Impact on Human Environment

1. Social Structures and Mores
2. Cultural Uniqueness and Diversity
8. Distribution of Population

The location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population nor the cultural uniqueness or diversity of the community surrounding the facility should not be altered. The fundamental moral views of a social group are not anticipated to be altered as a result of this permitting action.

3. Local and State Tax Base and Tax Revenue
9. Demands of Government Services

The changes to Stillwater Mining Company, Inc.'s air quality permit will not result in a need for new or altered governmental services nor are they anticipated to effect local or state tax bases or revenues.

4. Agricultural or Industrial Production
10. Industrial and Commercial Activity

The changes permitted in #2635-06 will not result in a reduction of available acreage or productivity of any agricultural land; therefore, agricultural production should not be affected. Industrial production at the facility will be increasing so minor impacts are anticipated. The industrial and commercial activity in the neighboring area is not anticipated to be altered substantially by this permit.

5. Human Health

The two primary vehicles for impact upon human health are water and air. Since there will be no change in the amount or characteristics of surface water discharged or the quality or quantity of ground water, human health impacts from water are not anticipated. The allowable increase in SO₂ and PM-10 emissions may result in an increase in airborne particulate matter in the area. Therefore, minor human health impacts from air quality are possible.

6. Access to and Quality of Recreational and Wilderness Activities

The actions permitted will not alter any existing access to and quality of any recreational or wilderness area.

7. Quantity and Distribution of Employment

The actions permitted in permit #2635-06 will result in an increase in the number of employees at the facility. However, the department does not anticipate that the distribution of employment surrounding community will be impacted.

11. Locally Adopted Environmental Plans and Goals

Permit #2635-06 should not affect any locally adopted environmental plans or goals.

12. Cumulative and Secondary Impacts

The two primary vehicles for impact upon human health are water and air. Since there are possibly minor air quality impacts from Stillwater Mining Company, cumulative human health impacts are possible from the facility.

Recommendation: An EIS is not required.

If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is an appropriate level of analysis: The source is applying the Best Available Control Technology; the analyses indicates compliance with all applicable air quality rules and regulations.

Other groups or agencies contacted or which may have overlapping jurisdiction: None

Individuals or groups contributing to this EA: Department of Environmental Quality - Air and Waste Management Bureau.

EA prepared by: Denise A. Kirkpatrick

Date: June 30, 1998