

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION
WATER RESOURCES DIVISION
WATER RIGHTS BUREAU

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. **Type of action:** WATER RIGHT PERMIT APPLICATION NO.
43BJ-107240-00
2. **Applicant/Contact name and address:**
Stillwater Mining Company
HC 54 Box 365
Nye MT 59061
3. **Water source name:** Three wells
4. **Location affected by action:** NWNWSE, SWSWNE, and NWSWNE Section 11, TWP 4 South, RGE 13 East, Sweetgrass County
5. **Narrative summary of the proposed project and action to be taken:** THE DNRC SHALL ISSUE A WATER USE PERMIT IF AN APPLICANT PROVES THE CRITERIA IN 85-2-311, MCA ARE MET. THIS APPLICATION IS TO USE 300 GPM UP TO 483.9 ACRE-FEET FOR INDUSTRIAL, MINING, AND DOMESTIC USES AT THE EAST BOULDER MINE IN SWEETGRASS COUNTY.
6. **Agencies consulted during preparation of the environmental assessment:**
The majority of information for this environmental assessment is being taken from the "East Boulder Mine Final Environmental Statement" prepared by the U S Forest Service in May 1992. The EIS is available at the US Forest Service Office in Big Timber, Montana.

On March 14. 2000, Bruce Gilbert, from the Stillwater Mining Company gave Keith Kerbel (Billings Water Resources Office Regional Manager) and I a tour of the proposed mine site and the area where the wells applied for in this application are to be constructed. We were able to get a better understanding of the areas mentioned in the EIS.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

1. Environmental Impact Checklist:

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Soils/Geologic Features:

Degradation of soil quality or alteration of soil stability, moisture content, geologic substructure, unique geologic features, archeological sites? **Sections 4.4.2 (p. 4-40) and 4.5.2. (p. 4-43 through 4-45) in the EIS address the soils and geologic impacts expected from the proposed mining activity. The possible impacts to archeological sites are identified under Section 4.1.2 (p. 4-4 through 4-6).**

Erosion:

Alteration of erosion or siltation patterns which modify stream beds or lake shores? **The potential erosion impacts are addressed under Section 4.4.2 (p. 4-40) in the EIS. Erosion impacts are also addressed under Surface Water Resources, Section 4.2.2 (p. 4-9).**

Vegetation/Noxious weeds:

Change in or adverse affect on diversity and production of local plant species including any unique or endangered species (including trees, shrubs, grass, and aquatic plants)? Establishment or spread of noxious weeds? **The potential affects on vegetation and the introduction of noxious weeds is addressed under Section 4.8.2 (p. 4-66 through 4-68) in the EIS.**

Air:

Deterioration of air quality, or adverse effects on vegetation due to increased air pollutants. **The potential affects of air quality are addressed in Section 4.9.2 (p. 4-72 & 4-73) in the EIS.**

Water:

Alteration of surface water or groundwater quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity or quantity or distribution? **Sections 4.2.2 (p. 4-8 through 4-20) and 4.3.2 (p. 4-31 through 4-37) in the EIS address the impacts expected on surface water and groundwater from the proposed mining activity.**

Floodplain:

Changes in drainage patterns, course or magnitude of flood flows, or exposure of people/property to hazards (flood)? **The potential impact to the floodplain is identified under Section 4.2.2 (p. 4-10 and 4-11).**

Wildlife Habitat/Migration:

Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat? Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of fish or wildlife? **Section 4.6.2 (p.4-48 through 4-57) addresses the potential impacts to wildlife habitat and wildlife migration patterns from the proposed mining activity.**

Endangered Species:

Adverse effects on any unique or endangered species? **Potential adverse affects to endangered species of animals are addressed in Section 4.6.2 (p. 4-55 and 4-56). The possible affect on endangered plant species is identified in Section 4.8.2 (p. 4-66 through 4-68) in the EIS. The affects on the fisheries are discussed in Section 4.7.2 (p. 4-61 through 4-63).**

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Existing Land Use:

Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area? **The EIS, in Section 4.11.2 (p. 4-80 and 4-81) discusses the potential adverse affect on land use from the mining activity.**

Historical Significance:

Destruction or alteration of a natural area of scientific or educational value or prehistoric or paleontological importance? **Section 4.1.2 (p. 4-4 through 4-6) identifies the potential adverse affect of the mining activity on historically significant areas.**

Populace:

Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area? Alteration of social structure of community? **The population in the area is expected to increase. The potential affects of the population increase are identified in Section 4.14.2 (p. 4-93 through 4-132).**

Transportation:

Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods? **The EIS addresses the potential impacts to increased transpotation in the area under Section 4.10.2 (p. 4-76 and 4-77). The affects are also addressed in Section 4.14..2 (p. 4-93 through 4-132).**

Safety:

Creation of any health hazard or affect on existing emergency response or evacuation plans? **The potential affects on safety in the area are discussed in Section 4.14.2 (p. 4-93 through 4-132) in the EIS.**

Public Services:

Have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? Have an effect upon local or state tax base? **The EIS discusses the affects on public services in Section 4.14.2 (p. 4-93 through 4-132).**

Utilities:

Creates need for new or altered facilities for any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications? **The impacts to utilities are addressed in Section 4.14.2 (p. 4-93 through 4-132) in the EIS.**

Aesthetics:

Alteration of any scenic vista or recreation opportunity or creation of an aesthetically offensive site to the public? **Potential adverse affects to the aesthetics of the area are addressed in Sections 4.12.2 (p. 4-83 and 4-84) and Section 4.15.2 (p.4-134 and 4-135).**

Other: The EIS addresses many other potential impacts from the proposed mining activity. A complete copy of the EIS is available at the US Forest Service Office in Big Timber, Montana.

2. Secondary and cumulative impacts: **The EIS discusses, quite comprehensively, the potential secondary and cumulative impacts of the proposed mining activity.**
3. Reasonable alternatives to the proposed action, including the no action alternative: **The EIS identifies many alternatives to the proposed action, including the no action alternative.**

PART III. CONCLUSION

Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? **An EIS has been completed and is available at the US Forest Service Office in Big Timber, Montana.**

If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action: **An EIS has been prepared.**

PREPARED BY:

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DATE: [Automatic date code removed]