



Good Neighbor Agreement

A unique solution for local protection

*A project of the **Northern Plains Resource Council**, and its local affiliates – Stillwater Protective Association and Cottonwood Resource Council – in conjunction with the Stillwater Mining Company*



Good Neighbors

The **Good Neighbor Agreement** is a partnership between citizens in Stillwater and Sweet Grass Counties and the Stillwater Mining Company, which operates two platinum/palladium mines in the area. The Agreement is designed to protect the area's quality of life, while providing for responsible economic development.

The **Good Neighbor Agreement**:

- Provides for **citizen oversight** of mining operations to ensure protection of the area's quality of life and productive agricultural land.
- Establishes **clear and enforceable water quality standards** that go above and beyond state requirements.
- Provides local communities with **access to critical information** about mining operations and the opportunity to address potential problems before they occur.
- Ensures **public safety and security** while protecting the interest of miners through traffic plans designed to reduce mining traffic on country roads.
- Raises the bar for **environmental excellence** by setting goals and objectives for developing new technologies. This is accomplished through a cooperative framework of third-party experts, the mining company, and local citizens.

The Good Neighbor Agreement is a legally binding contract between the Stillwater Mining Company (SMC), the Northern Plains Resource Council, and two Northern Plains affiliates – Cottonwood Resource Council and Stillwater Protective Association. The Agreement is binding on future owners and managers of SMC's platinum/palladium mines.

PRINCIPLES

The *Good Neighbor Agreement* operates on the following principles:

- Citizens have a right and responsibility to have a say in decisions that affect their lives.
- Sharing information builds trust and reduces misunderstanding.
- Good community relations and solid environmental performance are good for business.

IMPLEMENTATION

The *Good Neighbor Agreement* establishes three committees to ensure that the objectives of the contract are met:

OVERSIGHT COMMITTEES

The Agreement establishes an Oversight Committee for each mine to review operations and ensure compliance with the *Agreement*. The *Agreement* provides a dispute resolution process for disagreements, including arbitration and possible court action if terms of the *Agreement* are violated.

TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

Members of the Technology Committee analyze operational technologies, focusing on those that minimize waste and improve SMC's environmental performance. With the Technology Committee, local citizens know firsthand whether mining operations protect their clean water and healthy environment, and have the opportunity to encourage those technologies that best protect their interests.



**How it
works**



Water quality

The *Boulder and Stillwater Rivers* form the lifeblood of Sweet Grass and Stillwater Counties. Farmers and ranchers depend on river water to irrigate their crops and hay meadows; rural communities draw upon the rivers for drinking water; and fishermen enjoy the area's blue ribbon trout fishing.

MINING IMPACTS

Mining operations can contaminate water with dangerous levels of ammonia, nitrates, phosphorus, metals, and silt. The federal Environmental Protection Agency estimates that 40 percent of Western watersheds have been polluted by mining, leaving taxpayers with tens of billions of dollars in clean up costs.

POLLUTION PREVENTION

All too often, state water quality rules require remedial action only after established standards have been violated. In contrast, **the *Good Neighbor Agreement* is designed to avoid triggering regulatory action.** Under the *Agreement*, the Stillwater, Boulder, and East Boulder Rivers are rigorously monitored for changes in water quality. **Any** departure from baseline water quality requires an immediate response by SMC. This process offers both an early warning system, and an incentive for SMC to achieve a “zero” discharge effect.

LOCAL OVERSIGHT

The *Good Neighbor Agreement* involves local citizens – people who have the most at stake – in the monitoring of water quality in the Stillwater, Boulder, and East Boulder Rivers. This adds immediate local oversight to government and industry efforts to protect water quality.

- Citizens may attend all mine-related water quality inspections and sampling events.
- SMC provides funds for citizens to conduct independent water quality sampling.
- Citizens are provided with quarterly water quality reports.
- Members of the Oversight Committee review data supplied by SMC and act to ensure compliance with the *Agreement*.

People who live in the Stillwater and Boulder Valleys enjoy a quiet, rural lifestyle. Narrow two-lane highways and graveled country roads link small communities with outlying farms and ranches.

PUBLIC SAFETY

The narrow, winding stretch of Highway 78 running from Columbus to Absarokee is considered one of the most dangerous roads in Montana, with four times the state average for traffic accidents. With well over 1,000 employees, many of whom live miles from the mines, SMC's mining operations have the potential to dramatically diminish public safety in Stillwater and Sweet Grass Counties.

TRAFFIC REDUCTION

To ensure public safety, the *Good Neighbor Agreement* restricts mine traffic and provides for monitoring to ensure SMC keeps traffic within permitted levels.

BUSING AND CARPOOLING

To meet traffic requirements, the *Good Neighbor Agreement* provides for **carpooling** and **busing** to transport mine employees to and from the mines. Busing provides mine workers, many of whom work 10 to 12-hour shifts seven days in a row, with rest time, and keeps sleepy drivers off the road. Through these programs, traffic accidents on the roadways have fallen since the *Agreement* was signed, despite an increase in SMC's workforce.



Public Safety



John Gayusky

Land

The people who call the Boulder and Stillwater Valleys home treasure the open country and rural character of rolling farms and ranches and sweeping mountain views.

PRIME RANCH LAND

Over the years, SMC has purchased several ranches along the Boulder and Stillwater Rivers. In order to protect their agricultural integrity, SMC has agreed to establish conservation easements on these ranches.

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

Once established, these conservation easements will protect thousands of acres of prime agricultural land from the fate of subdivision and industrial development, thereby helping to preserve the rural character and protect land values in the area. In the future, when the platinum and palladium are gone, the agricultural integrity of these lands will be intact.

HOUSING

The dramatic influx of mine workers into traditionally rural areas poses unique challenges. Initially, SMC proposed to sponsor housing developments commonly known as “man camps” located away from nearby communities. Area residents feared that these housing developments would isolate mine workers while compromising the rural character of these areas.

COMMUNITY

The *Good Neighbor Agreement* seeks to prevent these sources of conflict and protect traditional land uses by requiring all mine-sponsored housing to be located within or next to existing communities. This has stabilized worker housing and encouraged participation of mine employees in their local communities.

The success of the Good Neighbor Agreement depends primarily on the volunteer efforts and commitment of local citizens. As with any contract, the Good Neighbor Agreement is only strong if it is enforced. Local members of Northern Plains work hard with mine representatives to ensure that the solutions envisioned by the Agreement become a reality.

BE PART OF THE SOLUTION!

The opportunities offered by the *Agreement* are available to all Northern Plains members. Take part in water sampling events, assist in the efforts of the Oversight or Technology Committees, and otherwise help make the *Agreement* work. If you are interested, please contact the Northern Plains home office:

NORTHERN PLAINS RESOURCE COUNCIL

2401 Montana Avenue, Suite 200 ♦ Billings, Montana 59101

TEL 406-248-1154 ♦ FAX 406-248-2110 ♦ www.northernplains.org ♦ info@nprcmt.org

JOIN NORTHERN PLAINS

You can contribute toward this ground-breaking effort by joining Northern Plains or one of its local affiliates. The **Stillwater Protective Association** oversees implementation for the Stillwater Valley, while the **Cottonwood Resource Council** ensures protection of the East Boulder Valley. As a Northern Plains member, you can be part of this unprecedented effort to balance the needs of local citizens with natural resource development:

Stillwater Protective Association

P.O. Box 106

Absarokee, MT 59001

Cottonwood Resource Council

P.O. Box 1105

Big Timber, MT 59011

The Northern Plains Resource Council is committed to land stewardship, to the preservation of family farms, ranches, and small businesses, and to providing the information and tools necessary to give citizens an effective voice in decisions that affect their lives.



John Gayusky

What you can do

Northern Plains Resource Council

2401 Montana Avenue, Suite 200

Billings, Montana 59101