The Good Neighbor Agreement, now even stronger

For over 20 years, the Good Neighbor Agreement (GNA) – a legally binding contract between the Stillwater Mining Company and local community groups – has successfully protected two pristine Montana rivers and maintained the rural quality of life that defines the local communities. The work continues today. Striving to further strengthen the proactive and precautionary approach of the GNA’s existing Water Program, local community groups took a leadership role in developing Water Quality Adaptive Management Plans (AMP) for each mine site. After three years of hard work with the mine, the robust protection plans were approved.

The Adaptive Management Plan implements a ‘proactive, precautionary approach’ that captures changes in water quality at the earliest stages of mine-related influence. The AMP requires the mine to take remedial actions to address even small changes in water quality, well before the violation of any state or federal permit standards. It took years of cooperative effort between the company and the Councils to iron out the final details. The AMP is a perfect example of working together through the spirit and letter of the Good Neighbor Agreement to protect Montana’s pristine water.

- Jerry Iverson
Cottonwood Resource Council

The Adaptive Management Plans seek to maintain baseline water quality in groundwater and surface water, while going above and beyond state and federal requirements to ensure the East Boulder and Stillwater Rivers remain healthy and pristine. Implementing the AMPs proves once again that when everyday people get engaged and involved in their communities, we can protect the places we all love for generations to come.
The main priority of the Adaptive Management Plans is to extend the Good Neighbor Agreement’s existing surface water program to include groundwater protection. This allows us to detect and react to water quality changes at the earliest possible time. It lays out a groundwater well system that includes three successive “rings” of wells to monitor any potential contaminants moving from the mining facility toward the river. Operational wells are closest to the source, intermediate wells are farther “downstream” of the operational wells, and downgradient wells are farther “downstream” of the intermediate wells. If concentration levels of contaminants reach specified trigger points, the AMPs require action by the mine.

The Adaptive Management Plan (AMP) requires groundwater monitoring wells much closer to the tailings impoundment than state and federal regulations require.

This means that should the tailing impoundment leak any contamination into groundwater, it can be detected as soon as possible, aiming to prevent contamination from reaching the surface water of Montana’s pristine rivers.

Unlined pond where treated mine water is discharged into groundwater, and ultimately makes its way to surface water.
What the AMP requires of the mine

The AMPs include a **Response Framework** that defines the actions the mines must take in the event of water quality changes. The Response Framework is based on a **Tiered Trigger Level Framework (TTLF)** that requires more aggressive action by the mine if levels of contamination increase or move closer to the river. Those actions include more frequent water quality monitoring, completion of independent studies to recommend mitigation and treatment options and – in the event of exceeding drinking water standards– required steps to return contaminated water to baseline conditions.

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### Contamination Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No Tier Requirement</th>
<th>Exceeds Tier 1</th>
<th>Exceeds Tier 2</th>
<th>Exceeds Tier 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any level of contamination</td>
<td>Baseline water quality standard</td>
<td>50% difference between Tier 1 and Tier 3</td>
<td>Lowest applicable water quality standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example: 0.17 mg/L of Nitrogen detected</td>
<td>Example: 3.84 mg/L of Nitrogen detected</td>
<td>Example: 7.50 mg/L of Nitrogen detected</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Action Required of Mine

**Operational Groundwater Wells**
- Notification Flag: requires reporting to community groups
- Monthly Monitoring
- Third party recommendations and corrective actions taken after **Oversight Committee** approval

**Intermediate Groundwater Wells**
- Monthly Monitoring
- Third party recommendations and corrective actions taken after **Oversight Committee** approval
- Monthly Monitoring

**Down Gradient Groundwater Wells**
- Monthly Monitoring
- Third party recommendations and corrective actions taken after **Oversight Committee** approval
- Monthly Monitoring
- Take corrective actions to return water to baseline quality

**Surface Water**
- Monthly Monitoring
- Third party recommendations and corrective actions taken after **Oversight Committee** approval
- Monthly Monitoring
- Take corrective actions to return water to baseline quality

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The **Oversight Committees** for each mine site are comprised of 2 representatives from the community groups and 2 representatives from the mine. The Committees work collaboratively to find consensus and compromise while ensuring the protection of the East Boulder and Stillwater Rivers.
Our vision for the Good Neighbor Agreement

We love pristine water, scenic beauty, night skies, and safe roads. We believe it is possible to protect our natural landscapes and rural quality of life while allowing responsible mineral development.

We envision maintaining a clean and healthful environment where potential adverse impacts from mining are minimized and our communities remain thriving.

For the past 20 years, the GNA has proven successful in protecting our rivers and rural communities. However, we can't stop now. Not only are the mines expanding, but we can also provide an example of what is possible when everyday people come together and get creative.

To learn more about the Good Neighbor Agreement and how you can get involved contact Mikindra at mikindra@northernplains.org or (406) 248-1154.