

# GOOD NEIGHBOR AGREEMENT

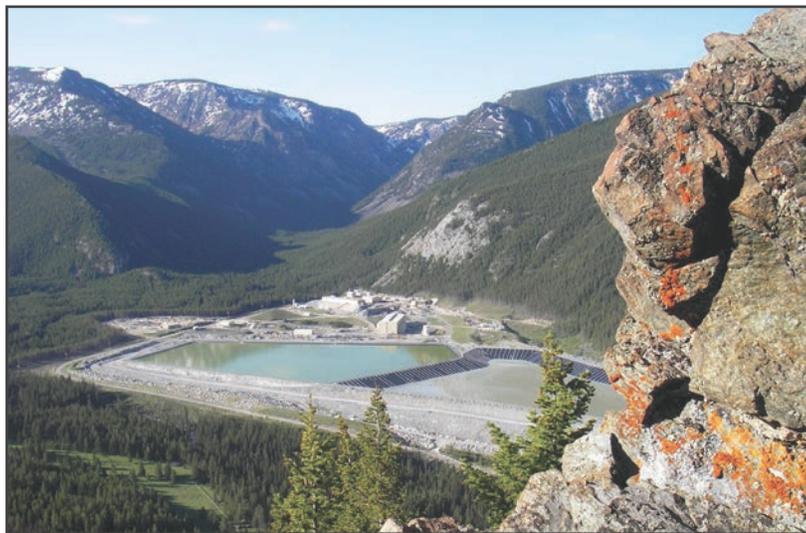
*An innovative partnership for development and conservation*

**When the Stillwater Mine opened in 1986, our communities felt the impacts of hard-rock mining:**

- The Stillwater and Boulder Rivers—two of Montana's blue-ribbon fisheries—were being polluted.
- Rural traffic nearly doubled and congested roads led to serious accidents.
- "Man-camps" and new facilities threatened to industrialize rural areas.

Motivated by the mine's impacts to their communities, residents of the Stillwater and Boulder Valleys came together and proposed a unique solution: **The Good Neighbor Agreement (GNA)**, a legally binding contract that would protect our quality of life while providing for responsible economic development. In 2000, after a year of negotiations, the Northern Plains Resource Council and affiliates, Stillwater Protective Association and Cottonwood Resource Council, signed the Good Neighbor Agreement with the Stillwater Mining Company (now known as Sibanye-Stillwater).

The Good Neighbor Agreement gives our communities a voice in protecting water quality, providing access to critical information, and ensuring the health and safety of everyone in the Stillwater and Boulder Valleys.



*"If we're going to have a mine, it's going to be the best damn mine in the World."*

*- Paul Hawks, Former Chair  
Northern Plains Resource Council*

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## What is the Good Neighbor Agreement?

Northern Plains members and mine employees have spent thousands of hours negotiating and overseeing the programs of the Agreement. Through the great work of community members—and the mine's willingness to enter into this unique agreement—we have continued to improve our Agreement since its inception in May of 2000.

The Good Neighbor Agreement provides **many benefits to our communities:**

### Transparency and Participation

The Agreement gives local communities the right to oversee decisions that affect their lives. Community members participating in the Good Neighbor Agreement meet with the mine frequently and have the ability to review mine decisions well before they are finalized with state and federal agencies.

The open sharing of information is one of the main reasons we've been able to develop unique solutions that protect our quality of life and productive agricultural land.

### 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.

Unlike state requirements, which only require remedial actions after water quality violations, the Good Neighbor Agreement takes a proactive approach to preventing water pollution. Under the Good Neighbor Agreement, the Stillwater and East Boulder rivers are rigorously monitored for water quality changes. Any change from baseline water quality requires an immediate response.

Over the past few years, we have worked together to identify potential water quality impacts far before they reach our rivers by developing comprehensive groundwater monitoring and protection programs.

### Public Safety

The narrow two-lane highways and graveled roads that link small communities in the Stillwater and Boulder Valleys are dangerous areas for congested traffic. With well over 1,000 employees, the mine has the potential to add significant traffic.

The Good Neighbor Agreement restricts mine traffic and provides for monitoring to ensure that the mine keeps traffic within the permitted levels. The agreement provides for busing and carpools to transport mine employees to and from the mine. Through these programs, traffic incidents have fallen despite increases in the mine's workforce.



## New Technologies

The Agreement requires the mine to undergo “pilot project” investigations of new technologies that could protect water, reduce land impacts, and improve public safety. We work with the mine to determine if new technologies are economically feasible and how we can implement them.

In 2015, the mine installed liners on their waste rock storage piles to capture nitrogen pollution that had been escaping to the river. In 2017, the mine installed the largest private solar array in the state of Montana at its smelter in Columbus.



## Land Use

Over the years, the mine has purchased several ranches along the Boulder and Stillwater Rivers. The Agreement requires that all property purchased by the mine be put under conservation easement, protecting this land from future subdivision and from the development of “man camps” near the mine site. Our goal is to prevent these sources of conflict and protect traditional land uses.

## Precedent-Setting

The Good Neighbor Agreement is an example of how we can develop the strongest possible future for our state by working through our communities. The programs we develop in the Good Neighbor Agreement are leading the mining industry as practical way for a company to offset their impacts to the surrounding community, and improve their long-term success in doing so.

It all adds up to major benefits for the community, but the mine has received benefits, too. In the years since the Agreement was signed, the mine has not been sued a single time, and the mine receives a premium on its metals sold to jewelers. Good community relations and solid environmental performance are good for business.

## Facing the Future of the Good Neighbor Agreement

As the Stillwater Mine continues to expand, the Good Neighbor Agreement faces some important issues. Not only is the mine running out of space to store its *current* tailings waste, but the mine will also be increasing its production, which means increased waste and additional traffic. The Agreement is being utilized to work through these issues. We have been working with mine engineers and the company's Board of Directors to review proposals and develop the best possible solutions as the mine continues to grow. However, the decisions made in these next few years will have lasting impacts on the health of our communities.

# What You Can Do

The success of the Good Neighbor Agreement depends on the volunteer efforts and commitment of local citizens. This Agreement is strong because local Northern Plains members work with mine representatives to ensure that the solutions envisioned by the Agreement become a reality.

## Members of Northern Plains can participate in the Good Neighbor Agreement by:

- Helping with water sampling or biomonitoring to prevent mine activities from harming our rivers. You will receive training for this.
- Hosting a house party to acquaint others with the Good Neighbor Agreement.
- Assisting with our oversight committee or our responsible mining technology committee. Members of these committees steer our work under the Agreement and meet directly with the mine.

## Be Part of the Solution!

You can contribute to this ground-breaking effort by joining Northern Plains or one of our local affiliates. The Stillwater Protective Association oversees implementation for the Stillwater Valley, while Cottonwood Resource Council ensures protection of the Boulder Valley.

To become a member of Stillwater Protective Association, Cottonwood Resource Council, or Northern Plains Resource Council, you can mail your payment along with the form below to the corresponding address, or you can join online at [https://northernplains.org/donate/#join\\_renew](https://northernplains.org/donate/#join_renew). For more information, please contact our Good Neighbor Agreement manager, Mikindra Morin at (406) 248-1154 or email [mikindra@northernplains.org](mailto:mikindra@northernplains.org).



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Cottonwood Resource Council  
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Big Timber, MT 59011

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\$50/month  \$25/month  \$20/month  \$15/month  \$10/month  Other\_\_\_

Northern Plains Resource Council  Cottonwood Resource Council  Stillwater Protective Association

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Northern Plains Resource Council (\$40)  Cottonwood Resource Council (\$45)

Stillwater Protective Association (\$50)

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