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Comments:

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am writing to comment on the Draft Revised Forest Plan for the Custer Gallatin National Forest and its accompanying Draft EIS, both issued in March, 2019.

Overall the draft EIS document demonstrates the dramatic and recent cuts in funding for the Forest Service leading to a poorly developed approach. I strongly urge the US Forest Service to reconsider how to better develop this document and return to a more traditional management approach, using ranger districts rather than the hugely diverse geographical units

I am a resident of Stillwater County which is within the Absaroka Beartooth Mountains Geographic Unit. I paid particular attention to those components. I am closely involved with oversight of the Sibanye-Stillwater Mine through the Good Neighbor Agreement. I am particularly concerned with the Stillwater Complex proposed in this plan and EIS. It is a new designation to specifically address the Sibanye-Stillwater Mines in the Absaroka Beartooth Mountains Geographic Area. In three alternatives a considerable acreage is set aside for the Complex. Yet I see no detailed analysis that describe permitted activities, their impacts on the environment and what measures Forest Service would put in place to mitigate impacts. I believe a more detailed analysis is necessary to select any alternative other than Alternative D, which zeros out the Stillwater Complex Acreage. I also could not find any analysis of the effects of Forest Service decisions on adjacent private lands. Much of the rock and ore from these mines comes from deposits controlled by the Forest Service. Their authorization of mining creates huge amounts of waste rock, very large tailings deposits, as well mine ore separation facilities, all of which are located off the Forest Service lands. I believe NEPA requires the Forest Service to assess all the impacts of their actions, including those that occur outside the forest boundary. I hope these matters will be addressed in the final EIS.

Sincerely,

William A. Hand