

Amy Sage  
822 Sweathouse Creek Road  
Victor, MT 59875

**RECEIVED**

JAN 07 2026

January 4, 2026

Ravalli County Commissioners

To: Bitterroot National Forest

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Attn: West Fork District Ranger Dan Pliley  
6735 West Fork Road  
Darby, MT 59829

Also CC: Montana DEQ, Ravalli County Commissioners

Subject: Formal Opposition to the Sheep Creek Project (FAST-41 Project)

Dear Ranger Pliley,

I am writing to express my firm opposition to the Sheep Creek rare earth element exploration and mining project proposed by U.S. Critical Materials. As a resident concerned with the health of the Bitterroot Valley, I urge the Forest Service and the Montana DEQ to reject the current Plan of Operations and remove this project from the FAST-41 "fast-track" list.

Key Points of Opposition:

**Threat to Headwaters:** The project is located at the headwaters of the West Fork of the Bitterroot River. This watershed is vital for the region's \$67 million fishery and tourism economy, as well as local agriculture. Any contamination from mining byproducts, such as the strong acids used in REE processing, would cause irreparable harm to the river system.

**Opposition to "Fast-Tracking":** I strongly object to the use of the FAST-41 program to streamline this project. Accelerating the permitting process for a mine in such a sensitive area limits the public's constitutional right to participate and ignores the unanimous opposition voiced by the Ravalli County Commissioners in December 2025.

**Wildlife and Habitat Risks:** The project area provides critical habitat for threatened species, including bull trout and grizzly bears. The industrialization of this remote area, including increased heavy truck traffic (up to 30 trucks per week), will permanently degrade these habitats.

**Lack of Transparency:** U.S. Critical Materials has failed to engage meaningfully with the local community or provide proof of their "mine of the future" claims. Without a comprehensive and non-accelerated Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), the risks of this project remain unacceptably high.

I request that the Forest Service prioritize the protection of our public lands and waters over industrial exploration and deny all pending permits for the Sheep Creek Project.

Sincerely,

Amy Sage  
Licensed Montana Property Manager  
SweetSageMT

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