

Dear Payette Forest Supervisor Keith Lannom and staff,

Even as a native Idahoan, I too once asked, “Where the heck is Yellow Pine?” It wasn’t until I began whitewater kayaking that I began to discover the South Fork Salmon drainage and all that it has to offer. I did my first overnight kayaking trip from the confluence of the Secesh to Carey Creek on the Main Salmon. Since then, I have returned to the drainage every year, taking advantage of the pristine whitewater, scenery, and solitude. In fact, the East Fork South Fork has become one of my favorite kayaking destinations across this entire state. This would change if there were to be any mishaps at the proposed Stibnite Gold Project.

While I am certainly not opposed to mining per se, there are several aspects of the Stibnite Gold Project that concern me:

Endangered Fish

To me, salmon are perhaps the greatest cultural icon of our state. On their trip to the ocean and back, Sockeye, Chinook, and Steelhead travel higher and farther than any other species of salmon in the world. This “fitness” (in the Darwinian sense) did not come easy. This took thousands of years to develop.

Besides just being impressive, salmon are vital to our land and our people. On their trip home, they bring invaluable oceanic nutrients. After spawning and expiring, the nutrients are dispersed throughout Idaho’s forests and waters. These nutrients allow the native species of our ecosystems to flourish.

And it’s not just our forests and rivers that like these anadromous fish. When there is a fishing season for these suckers, people flock from far and wide to fish the East Fork South Fork and its tributaries. These visitors provide a much-needed boon to the businesses of Valley County.

It’s pretty simple: should there be any miscalculations at the Stibnite Gold Project, this drainage will be a death sentence for the anadromous fish that are genetically drawn here. These miscalculations have happened before, and they will happen again. Between the high levels of arsenic from previous mines, and the sediment pollution disaster from the timber roads, we owe one to these South Fork Salmon salmon. Please consider these anadromous fish in your consideration of the Stibnite Project.

Bonds

It is my understanding that in order to receive a mining permit, the company must put down a security deposit for environmental clean-up. I urge you to consider setting this figure realistically, at a level that will reflect the true cost of clean-up.

That being said, I have a question: Can you please give me a spreadsheet that shows 3 figures for mines across the West: (1) The price of the bond for the permit; (2) the cost of clean-up after the mining disaster; and (3) what percentage of the mess was actually cleaned up. Please consider these figures when setting the price of the bond for Midas Gold. In fact, please inflate the figure to cover a worst-case scenario. We cannot continue to subsidize foreign mining companies. If they want to mine our land, they must pay the price.

Jobs

Midas Gold promises the citizens of Valley County that this mine will boost the economy, with high-quality jobs. But is the labor pool in Valley County really equipped to handle the high-quality jobs that they refer to? **That being said, I have another question:** Can you prepare a spreadsheet that shows 2 figures for mines across the West: (1) The number of specialized, high-paying jobs that these types of mining operations bring to the County, and what percentage of those jobs go to local people; and (2) the number of non-specialized, low-paying jobs that these mines create, and what percentage of those jobs go to local people.

I urge you to please consider the true economic boost that this will give to **local people**. And please consider the negative effects on industries such as fishing, river-running, hunting, guiding, and many others. In other words, please consider the *net* job creation, not just the *gross* figure.

Conclusion

We need mining. Any hippie who thinks otherwise is hypocritical. We all use precious metals every day. But the risks heavily outweigh the potential benefits of this project. Please impose regulations and costs that will truly reflect the dangers of this project. Taxpayers have been paying for the clean-up from past mines in this drainage for too long. Let's quit picking the scab and leave it alone.

Best regards,
Matthias Fostvedt