

From: Keith Allred
To: [FS-comments-intermtn-payette](#)
Subject: Stibnite Gold EIS Scoping Comment
Date: Thursday, July 20, 2017 11:34:01 AM

Dear Mr. Lannom,

I write to comment on the EIS Scoping for the proposed Stibnite Gold project.

Midas Gold Corp. invited me to join their board of directors because of my experience in resolving conflicts unique to the West, particularly mining disputes. For example, I'm the founder and leader of the Upper Blackfoot Confluence, a partnership of three mining companies (Monsanto, Simplot, and Agrium) and two conservation groups (Idaho Conservation League and Trout Unlimited) that works to restore native Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout habitat on the Upper Blackfoot River in southeastern Idaho's phosphate patch. Midas also invited me to join their board because I was the Democratic nominee for governor in 2010. Midas knew that I am a stout and credible defender of the environment and welcomed that perspective on its board.

I accepted their invitation to join the board because the project is so fundamentally sound. In twenty years of mediating large, environmental disputes in the West, I have never seen a mining project that would do so much for the economy *and* the environment. You know all too well from your own experience how difficult it is to do anything on public lands these days that doesn't meet with passionate objections from both the left and the right. Stibnite is the rare project that will advance the legitimate interests of all sides. There is no other credible prospect by which the glaring legacy impacts of this brownfield can be cleaned up. Restoration of the salmon run, clean-up of the sentiment loading into a legendary fishery, and restoration of the Glory Hole are just some of the significant environmental benefits. A permit for the proposed Stibnite Plan of Restoration and Operations (PRO) would bring all those environmental benefits in addition to \$1 billion worth of investment into the Idaho economy.

Given the unique benefits offered by the Stibnite PRO, it warrants a thorough and timely NEPA process. Experiences I had while a professor at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government gives me some insight into the challenges the Forest Service faces in the NEPA process. I first became familiar with Forest Service experience with NEPA through a few dozen senior Forest Service officials who participated in Harvard's Senior Executive Fellows and Senior Managers in Government executive programs in which I taught several days on negotiation and conflict resolution. The discussions that I had with your colleagues ultimately led to a joint project with Dale Bosworth when he was Chief. I agreed to make the Forest Service NEPA process the focus of one of my graduate seminars in which the final paper for each student would be a brief for the Chief on how to apply conflict resolution best practices within NEPA. In exchange, Chief Bosworth agreed to fly down the two students who wrote the best briefs and myself to brief the Chief and his senior staff.

The experience was one of my most memorable and satisfying as a professor. It made clear for me two unintended consequences of NEPA. First, because of self-selection in who participates in the comment periods, NEPA makes issues appear more polarized than they are. A tiny fraction of everyday citizens participate. Those with passionate and extreme views, and those with special

interests, participate disproportionately. The unintended effect, then, is to give greater voice to the extremes and to mute the more moderate views of the vast majority of Americans.

A second unintended consequence, as Chief Bosworth articulated well, is “analysis paralysis.” I was given a tour of the floor at Forest Service headquarters where the current NEPA-related litigation files are stored. It was jaw dropping. An unfortunate consequence of NEPA is that we as a nation spend an inordinate amount of time and money on analysis and process, much of which does very little to improve things on the ground. I was struck by how passionate senior attorneys who handled Forest Service litigation were about how frequently Forest Service officials on the ground running NEPA processes spent extensive time and attention on process trying to bullet proof it from litigation, efforts that the attorneys saw as ineffective and irrelevant for that purpose. When it comes to NEPA process, longer and more complicated does not mean better.

Given my experience as a member of Midas Gold Corp’s board of directors, as a professor of dispute resolution, as a mediator with thousands of hours working to resolve controversial disputes in the West, and as a fifth-generation Idahoan who loves his native state, I encourage you to conduct a NEPA process that thoroughly vets the Stibnite PRO but that does not make the mistake of assuming that longer and more ponderous is better. Midas is eager to invest in restoration. The historic Stibnite mining district needs that restoration. If the Stibnite PRO proves to be one worthy of permitting, which I firmly believe that it is, it will benefit everyone if we get to that point in a timely way and get on with the restoration work and the investment that will boost Idaho’s economy.

Best wishes to you and your colleagues’ efforts to serve the public interest in the Stibnite Gold EIS process. I know how challenging and thankless that work can be. In this case, I’m confident that it’s a worthwhile effort.

Sincerely,

Keith Allred

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