

Linda Jackson, Payette Forest Supervisor

U.S. Forest Service, Payette National Forest
500 North Mission Street
McCall, ID 83638

Dear Ms. Lisa Jackson,

I am heartened to see a mining company take an interest in not only developing the Stibnite-Yellow Pine region, but actually putting in the effort to fix some of the problems that have plagued the area for decades. I urge you to approve this project as laid out in Midas Gold Idaho's alternative 2, which was examined in the draft environmental impact statement released by the U.S. Forest Service.

For over 80 years, local fish like the Chinook Salmon, steelhead, and bull trout have been unable to access what was once their historic spawning and rearing habitats as a result of mismanaged mining activity from years before today's modern environmental regulations under the National Environmental Policy Act.

Originally, the East Fork of the South Fork of the Salmon River was diverted to allow for excavation at the Yellow Pine Pit. Once mining was complete, the river was allowed to flow back to its original route, but the pit was left wide open, making it impossible for these local fish populations to swim upstream to the cooler waters and higher elevations that are more suitable for spawning and rearing of juvenile fish. This problem persists to this day.

Midas Gold has outlined extensive restoration plans for this section of the Salmon River, with the ultimate goal of restoring passageway for migrating fish permanently once mining operations are complete. However, Midas Gold has also gone the extra mile to help these fish connect to spawning grounds concurrently with mining activity by proposing to build a state-of-the-art temporary tunnel using best practices gleaned from similar systems used around the world. This will help jumpstart fish population recovery even sooner.

According to the draft environmental impact study, these proposed solutions to remove historical barriers to fish migration will go a long way in helping local fish populations. Chapter four found, for example, that long-term access to historically blocked critical habitat would result in increased productivity (4.12-33). That is why it is so important to approve alternative 2. This solution improves upon Midas Gold's original plan by making updates to its rock storage facilities in order to further reduce impacts to salmon habitat. And, unlike alternatives 3 and 4, restoration work could begin right away with alternative 2.

Please approve alternative 2 and help protect local fish in the Stibnite-Yellow Pine region.

Sincerely,

