

October 1, 2020

U.S. Forest Service, Payette National Forest
Attn: Linda Jackson, Payette Forest Supervisor
500 North Mission Street
McCall, ID 83638
Dear Ms. Linda Jackson,

I write you today to encourage you to approve the Stibnite Gold Project proposed by Midas Gold Idaho. This project will provide the opportunity to support environmental restoration of Idaho lands that have been neglected for generations. Not only that, but it would provide a range of economic benefits that could help create Idaho jobs, support local communities, and drive investment across the state. A project of this magnitude deserves support and I strongly urge you to approve Alternative 2 in the draft Environmental Impact Statement.

As former Idaho Secretary of State, I also served on the Idaho Land Board, which manages 2.5 million acres of state endowment land and oversees the Department of Lands in their regulatory duties and in managing Idaho's public trust lands. I understand the importance of protecting and preserving Idaho's immense natural resources—as well as the need to restore areas like Stibnite-Yellow Pine.

Fortunately, it seems as though Midas Gold also understands this need. They have made environmental restoration a core part of their plan for redevelopment and operations of the Stibnite mine. As a matter of fact, they seem to take environmental protections so seriously that they have already begun restoration work before the project has even been approved. To date, that includes planting more than 55,000 trees on site to help address erosion issues; reclaiming 33 acres of land; recycling 4,000 pounds of waste; and investing \$350,000 to improve road conditions and reduce the sediment runoff into local waterways.

Once approved, the company has committed to taking these efforts to the next level. They have outlined how they intend to reconnect local fish populations to the historical spawning grounds that they have been isolated from for more than 80 years, including both the construction of a temporary tunnel while operations are ongoing as well as full restoration of the Salmon River once they are complete.

One of the reasons this project will be different than previous efforts this region has seen is because of the strict environmental regulations that oversee mining projects in the 21st century. Today's mining industry follows some of the strictest regulatory standards in the world, and Midas Gold has made every effort to participate in the process while even exceeding many

regulatory standards along the way, including safety standards for a proposed new facility that will store the aforementioned spent mining materials and waste rock.

Another way Midas Gold has gone above and beyond is through its commitment to financial assurance, which guarantees that there is money set aside ahead of time for a third-party—the U.S. Forest Service, in this case—to come in and finish environmental reclamation of this area once mining operations have ended. Idaho law requires financial backing to ensure the true cost of reclamation is funded, and Midas Gold has even raised the bar on how those costs are calculated, ensuring proper reclamation takes place.

Of course, all of these efforts will be good for the environment, but the economic benefits of this project cannot be overlooked. Midas Gold has already been a valuable partner with Idaho, having spent nearly \$70 million to date with local Idaho contractors, vendors, and suppliers, spurring economic activity in central Idaho and throughout the state. They have indicated that they intend to continue hiring locally whenever possible.

Representing a more-than \$1 billion investment to build and roughly \$230 million in annual operating costs, the Stibnite Gold Project would give our state's economy a much-needed boost. It would also provide valuable local and state tax revenue that could support an array of services in communities statewide. At a time when Idaho—and the entire country—is trying to get back on its feet after the recent economic downturn, these contributions are critically important and should be factored into your decision.

The Stibnite Gold Project presents a rare opportunity to create jobs, foster economic growth, and strengthen Idaho communities—all in a modern, environmentally protective way. As someone who cares deeply about the people of this state, I think it only makes sense to pursue a project that will provide so many benefits. I ask that you keep these viewpoints in mind as you continue to consider the Stibnite Gold Project.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ben Ysursa". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid, with a long, sweeping tail on the "a".

Ben Ysursa
Former Idaho Secretary of State