

26 September 2020

Ms. Linda Jackson
Payette Forest Supervisor
500 North Mission Street
McCall, ID 83638

Dear Ms. Jackson,

I am writing this brief letter to offer my full support for Alternative 5 of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Stibnite Gold Project.

I came to McCall in the late 1980s, the son of a forester. As a part of a Forest Service family, we moved around quite a bit and were exposed to many places throughout the West. My father instilled in us an appreciation of *Nature* and the *Wild*. These deeply held values strongly factor into who I am and what I stand for. I am teaching this to my children as well. I now live in Boise and we regularly recreate in Valley County. I want to protect what we have!

A common theme of my exposure to the wilds of the Western United States is that mining operations have a great impact on the local (and sometimes far-reaching) environment. The most prevalent model in my experience is for a large mining corporation (often international) to go in and take what they need with little concern for the impact on the environment, and then leave and file for bankruptcy. This model leaves poison behind that lasts for centuries and removes the liability of the perpetrators. Their focus is on the dollars and little else. It is unconscionable that we would enter into such an agreement given what we know.

I would direct you to the following article from the AP News with relevant quotations added for emphasis.

“50M gallons of polluted water pours daily from US mine sites” Feb 2019
<https://apnews.com/article/8158167fd9ab4cd8966e47a6dd6cbe96>

Every day many millions of gallons of water loaded with arsenic, lead and other toxic metals flow from some of the most contaminated mining sites in the U.S. and into surrounding streams and ponds without being treated, The Associated Press has found.

That torrent is poisoning aquatic life and tainting water supplies in Montana, California, Colorado, Oklahoma and at least five other states.

The pollution is a legacy of how the mining industry was allowed to operate in the U.S. for more than a century. Companies that built mines for silver, lead, gold and other “hardrock” minerals could move on once they were no longer profitable, leaving behind tainted water that still leaks out of the mines or is cleaned up at taxpayer expense.

I have seen the Stibnite area many times. The effects of prior mining are apparent and disquieting. There is poison in the ground, the water, the stream beds, and so on. For now, it is confined to this area. Any new activity will certainly release heavy metals and other nastiness into our waters, air, and soil. The EFSF of the Salmon and its headwaters are likely filled with such poisons. Do we want these

disturbed and reintroduced into the watershed, the SF of the Salmon, the Main Salmon, Snake, Clearwater, Columbia?

The damages caused by all mining operations far outweigh the benefits that may be speculated. As is ongoing in Alaska today, the ecological impacts of commercial mining are profound. There is no such thing as "ecologically sound" mining. These operations lay waste to the local ecology.

Reading through the EIS generates a who's who of toxic substances. Sodium cyanide (a poisonous compound), mercury, lead nitrate (a carcinogen) are all listed as part of the leaching process and will reside in the mix of the various materials that will be put back into the environment and transported over Idaho roads, along Idaho rivers. These are in addition to what may be stirred up with any new activity. Also, the trucks are to travel out and create exposure on Warm Lake Road and Highway 55 (Payette River or north to 95 exposure to the Salmon River). I read no mention of care taken once the bags of desiccated slurry leave the mine site.

It is unconscionable to me that we would continue to propagate such a poor model of treatment of the public's legacy. Ms. Jackson, you have in your power to act with specific regard as the caretaker of our trust. Public land must be preserved and protected. Allowing the fox into the chicken coop whether or not the fox is wearing a tie or promising big profits is still a bad deal for the farmer.

Please say no to all options that are not Alternative 5. Any acceptance of other alternatives needs to come with heavy regulation, testing, and upfront bonding of the complete picture (i.e. billions of dollars put into trust). Mining companies need to be held accountable for their impacts now and in perpetuity.

Thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to provide comments.

Samuel Mark LaSalle
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