

October 28, 2020

Linda Jackson, Forest Supervisor,
U.S. Forest Service, Payette National Forest,
500 N. Mission St., Building 2,
McCall, ID 83638-3805

RE: Stibnite Gold Project Draft EIS #50516

Dear Ms. Jackson,

My name is Matt Taylor, I am a former employee of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), avid outdoor enthusiast, and professional in the environmental sector. Between 2010 and 2014, I worked five seasonal appointments with the U.S. Forest Service, four with the Rocky Mountain Research Station conducting field work as a Hydrologic Technician associated with the Geomorphic Road Analysis and Inventory Package (GRAIP) project and one season as the Payette River Ranger in the Boise National Forest. During my work with the GRAIP project, I spent a full season conducting field work in the upper South Fork Salmon Watershed, based out of Warm Lake, Idaho. As a Hydrologic Technician and River Ranger based in Garden Valley, I made countless pilgrimages to the South Fork Salmon and the East Fork of the South Fork Salmon.

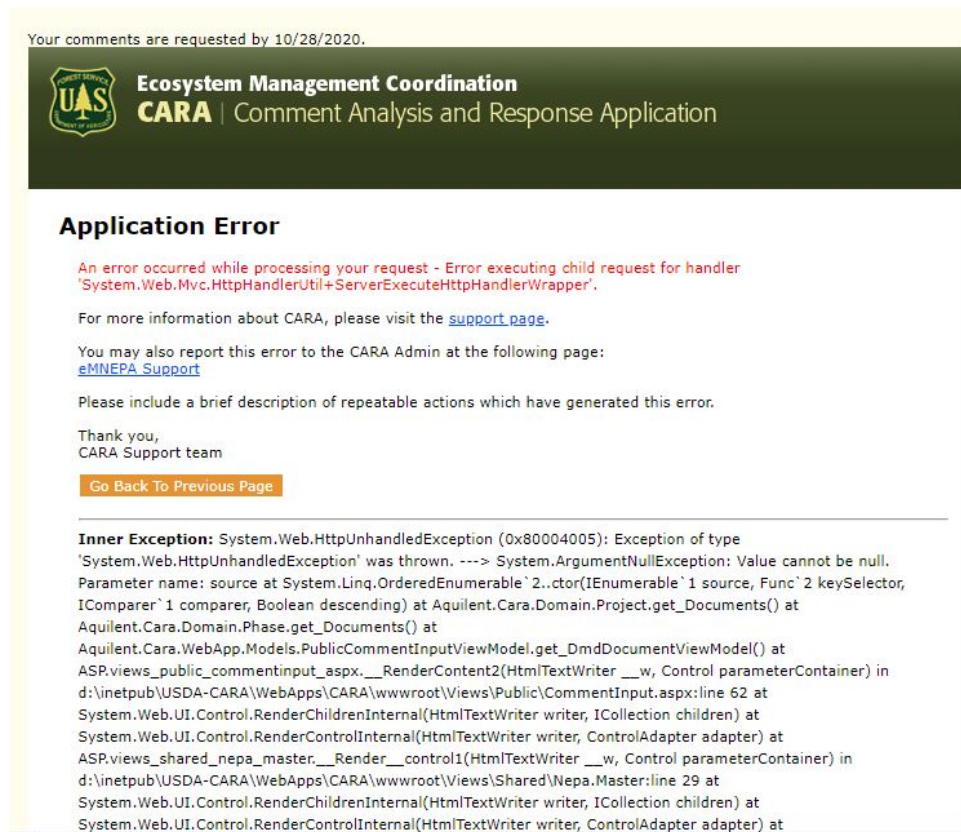
I grew up in the state of Texas, attended college in the state of Arkansas, and had the good fortune of stumbling into a passion for the outdoors. I have been privileged to travel and explore our great country extensively, and in my opinion, I don't think there is a finer landscape in the United States than the South Fork Salmon watershed. I know that is a highly anecdotal comment, not worthy of response in a NEPA process, but as a native Texan, growing up in a state and region that is largely devoid of public lands and that has been highly developed, I really cannot convey the sense of pride and awe that someone from Texas, or any other state lacking public lands, finds in Idaho. I saw my first wild bear, my first wild wolf, and my first spawning salmon in the headwaters of the South Fork Salmon. I know these are not economic statistics detailing why preservation of the river is more valuable than building the mine, but this is truly one of America's most incredible landscapes with intangible assets beyond near term economic valuation.

I attempted to understand that specific economic benefits associated with the Stibnite Mining Project; I also sought to understand the potential impacts to ecosystem services provided by the South Fork Salmon watershed, the almost certain deleterious impacts to species habitat that could come from the project, the cumulative stresses of a lengthy project in a region previously subjected to unsound extraction practices, and the strain this will have on our climate. Unfortunately for a period of several weeks, I have been unable to reach critical documents and webpages associated with the project. I wish I would have documented these website failings more diligently throughout the multi-week period. However, below are examples of the website issues I've experienced, causing an inability for myself and other citizens to access the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) as well as the public comment portal.

Image 1. Attempt to download the Draft EIS, which has failed. This issue has been occurring for multiple days and was observed from two different computers.



Image 2. Image associated with the USFS Draft EIS comment portal. As of October 28th the portal was not functional and would not allow for citizens to submit their comments.



While I cannot offer specific comments on the legitimacy of the project, or its alternatives, due to the technology issues; whether necessary 401 Water Quality Certification permits are discussed, 404 permits, cumulative impacts, contributions to climate change, etc. I do know that given the scale of this project, the citizens, communities, organizations, and businesses that are potentially impacted, every stakeholder should be afforded the absolute most time possible to study and understand this project and the tradeoffs. The fact that there have been website, document, and comment portal failures over the last several weeks and the unknown implications of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic on the comment process, this in my opinion warrants the extension of the comment period. The long-term ramifications of this project, advantages and disadvantages, should continue to be documented and discussed before a Final EIS is issued. We are considering a multi-generational alteration to one of America's greatest landscapes, its citizens are warranted more time and detail to consider this project.

Sincerely,
Matt Taylor