Exploratory Drilling In Long Valley

The following comment should be appended to Stanley Backlund comment submitted on May 2:

Hot Creek and the Mammoth area are major attractions for living and recreation. There are year round opportunities for fishing, hiking, camping, skiing, birding, etc. It is a destination resort that attracts visitors from California, the Nation and internationally. All of these visitors spend money for their visit to the region. This spending must be in the tens of millions of dollars annually. People come to visit Hot Creek and also visit in Mammoth Lakes and surrounds.

Hot Creek is a managed wild trout water that attracts the anglers and visitors above. Damage to the Hot Creek eco system and the surrounding vistas will seriously detract from visitation. What could possibly go wrong? Well, first of all, where does Kore Mining intend to get its water to drill? If they do drill and hit the water table, waste water will contain arsenic, boron, and chlorine. This is directly above one of the region’s best fisheries, Hot Creek. Also consider the fact that water eventually flows into the Owens River, Crowley Lake, and then Los Angeles kitchen sinks. Kore Mining doesn’t use pack animals. Extensive truck traffic hauling water and waste in and out on roads that are now overgrown will create noise, light, and air pollution. I don’t believe guests staying at Hot Creek Ranch envision a week of fly fishing accompanied with the sound of drilling. Athletes training at Whitmore would breathe air pollution.

Let’s suppose gold is found. What do we have? One large open pit mine. How’s the air pollution working for people living near Owens Lake? The area being proposed to explore is wildlife habitat. Deer, sage grouse, etc. Deer tags aren’t as easy to come by as they used to be, and the sage grouse is a protected bird. I can’t imagine mining that close to Hot Creek Hatchery would be good for an already embattled entity. Thousands and thousands of visitors walk Hot Creek each summer to see the geothermal area. They end up with this magnificent view of the fields and Mammoth Mountain. Now substitute that with an open pit mine.

One of the most controversial mining proposals of current times is that of Pebble Mine which ended last November when the Trump Administration killed off hopes of digging up Bristol Bay, Alaska. Pebble Mine wanted to extract gold, copper, and molybdenum. Bristol Bay is also home of one of the largest salmon runs in the world, a money maker for both commercial fishers and its tourism-based economy. The environmental risk has been declared too great and further action has been stopped.

The environmental considerations of the Pebble Mine and Kore Mining are quite similar. Both present questions of access infra structure installation, water needs, waste water disposal, soils waste disposal and protection of the existing fishery.

The risks were too great for the Pebble Mine and are also too great for Long Valley.

Stanley Backlund

Trout Unlimited El Dorado