



October 1, 2021

Gay Baxter
Klamath National Forest
11263 North Highway 3
Fort Jones, CA 96032

Re: Discovery Day Mining Environmental Assessment

Dear Forest Service,

Thank you for accepting these brief comments concerning the Discovery Day Mining Proposal Environmental Assessment (EA) on behalf of the Klamath Siskiyou Wildlands Center, the Environmental Protection Information Center and the Klamath Forest Alliance. Contact information for our organizations may be found at the conclusion of this document.

We again ask Klamath National Forest planners to ***please recognize the outstanding remarkable values of the Wild and Scenic South Fork Salmon River which serves as a NW Forest Plan Key Watershed for fisheries and water quality.*** We urge you to be mindful of the significant recreational and fisheries values provided by the Salmon River. Please acknowledge that the proposed mining activities are located within the Late Successional and Riparian Reserve land use allocations in which providing high quality terrestrial and aquatic habitat are the required management goals.

Simply put, the Discovery Day Mine Plan EA reads as if the Late Successional Reserve land use allocation and the Key Watershed designation do not exist. Rather than contribute to the Forest Service management objectives of the LSR and the Key Watershed, the proposed mining will directly harm and inhibit the purpose of the land use allocations where the mining occurs. The proposal to manage the LSR as a non-forested private mine represents a violation of both the Klamath National Forest Resource Management Plan and the Northwest Forest Plan.

The EA fails to disclose or quantify the number and location of hazard trees to be logged and utilized at the mill. The EA also fails to disclose or quantify the impacts of removing old-growth wildlife snags in the LSR and riparian reserve land use allocations.

Disturbance to Northern spotted owls, goshawks and Pacific fisher in this Late Successional “Reserve” require documentation and analysis in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

We are unable to locate a water right for the project proponent. It appears that the Forest Service is poised to grant use of a riparian water right for this private mining operation to the detriment of aquatic and fisheries values. This represents a violation of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy of the Northwest Forest Plan.

The EA fails to disclose who for the Forest Service will examine and analyze the acid mine drainage chemistry. The EA fails to disclose what such an analysis will consist of and entail. It appears that the existing adit discharge water metals sample was taken in 2012 when less mining activity was occurring than is proposed in the Plan of Operations currently under consideration.

Why have noxious weed mitigation strategies in the project area proved ineffective to this point such that star thistle continues to be a problem at the site?

Unauthorized road/route utilization is proposed for continued utilization in this project. How does continued use of this road/route contribute to the Transportation Management Plan as implemented through the Motor Vehicle Use Map or to the goals and the objectives of reducing road density in the Key Watershed? Is the unauthorized road/route also located in the Late-Successional and Riparian Reserve land use allocations? The Forest Service’s contention in the EA that the Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) and Travel Management Planning process are inapplicable to the Discovery Day mine is incorrect.

We are concerned about the proposed heavy equipment crossing through Knownothing Creek. It appears that this portion of the creek provides critical habitat or essential habitat for fisheries and that spawning has occurred at this location during high flow events. There does not appear to be an existing permit to “rock” the low-water crossing.

The Plan of Operation and the EA fail to analyze the effectiveness of “disposal alternatives” that are being considered for mill tailings. The EA also fails to fully disclose the findings of the testing concerning these mine tailings. The Plan of Operations and EA also fails to disclose the content of the hypothetical “optimal tailings disposal plan” that may (or may not) be developed with the Forest Service.

The production of 12,087 cubic yards of toxic mine tailings is a significant action necessitating analysis and disclosure in an EIS.

As acknowledged on page 14 of EA the two existing tailing ponds have “non-compliant levels of arsenic” and “exceed allowable limits of heavy metals” including copper. Clearly this situation does not meet the intent of the LSR land use allocation, the Aquatic

Conservation Strategy or the Key Watershed designation. It also appears to be a violation of the Clean Water Act. Why are the toxic tail ponds unlined?

The EA fails to disclose or analyze if any aquatic species, amphibians or birds access the toxic tailing ponds.

Page 27 of the EA acknowledges that the South Fork Salmon watershed and Knownothing Creek are listed under the Clean Water Act as 303(d) for elevated temperature problems. Yet the EA does not analyze or disclose the impacts of water withdrawals of up to 125 gallons per minute on stream temperature and flow.

We urge the Forest Service to manage this project area for the wildlife and aquatic values that this Late Successional Reserve and Key Watershed are intended to provide.

Thank you for considering our comments and concerns.



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