

22 November 2021

VIA U.S MAIL AND STIBNITE GOLD PROJECT WEB PORTAL

Linda Jackson, Payette Forest Supervisor

Stibnite Gold Project

500 N. Mission Street, Building 2, McCall, Idaho 83638

Re: Comment on Stibnite Gold Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Dear Ms. Jackson,

As a senior at MSU Denver studying biology and a resident of Colorado, I know the damages gold mining inflicts on communities. Those who work in the mines come home with respiratory diseases and back pain. The mines pollute our water, degrade our soil, poison our ecosystems, and adulterate our air. Even years after the mines reach their expiration, rivers remain uninhabitable, soils remain tarnished, leaving people with mercury in their water, fish with no stream to inhabit, plants with no means to take root, and riparian dwellers with no place to call their home.

In Colorado, we have over 23,000 abandoned mines, polluting over 1,800 miles of streams (CO Dept. of Public Health and Environment). These carelessly abandoned mines left their legacy on Colorado - continuous water pollution and contamination. Some of these mines are over 150 years old, and we *still* pay for the consequences of irresponsible mining. After 150 years, we *still* spend millions of dollars annually on water restoration and mine cleanup (CO Dept. of Public Health and Environment). After 150 years, mining communities *still* do not have clean drinking water. After 150 years, riparian ecosystems are *still* struggling to take hold. Why am I mentioning Colorado's mining legacy, you may ask. Colorado is a perfect example of how mining can continuously contaminate waterways, even 150 years later. I urge you to consider this. The mining you do today will impact your children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren. The forest streams that salmon, humpback chubs, and other migratory fish once called home will be decimated of life. The people downstream will be stuck with toxic drinking water for at least the next 150 years. Don't make the same mistakes Colorado did. I urge you to do everything in your power to prevent the Stibnite Gold mine from being abandoned. Be a responsible citizen of the earth and clean up, reforest, and replace the degraded soil when you finish the project.

Thankfully there is a difference between Colorado in 1850 and mining today: we have proven the risks of mining, and *proactively* enacted measures to protect our precious watersheds and ecosystems. Legal measures were enacted to protect the South Fork Salmon River. The South Fork Salmon river, threatened by the Stibnite Gold Project, is a major tributary to the Wild and Scenic Main Salmon river. The South Fork Salmon and many sections of its tributaries have

been deemed eligible and suitable under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act by the U.S. Forest Service. These rivers and tributaries are essential to the health of major ecosystems, the health of the people, and the health of the wildlife. Habitants of the South Fork Salmon include endangered Chinook salmon and steelhead, protected by the Endangered Species Act of 1973. The South Fork Salmon also offers essential habitat and breeding grounds for migratory fish. With the South Fork Salmon at the head of the tributaries, it is of utmost importance to conserve and protect the precious water for everyone downstream. Completing and operating the mine would put Perpetua Resources Corp. at substantial risk for litigation in violation of the Endangered Species Act, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, Clean Water and Air Acts (CWA, CAA), and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for various crimes against the environment and its inhabitants (Coriell et al. 2020).

Fish aren't the only ones reliant on the South Fork Salmon, people are. We rely on these tributaries for clean drinking water, recreation, and our health. This project holds substantial risk for water contamination. Mineral leaching is an inevitable process which feeds various metals, salts and processing chemicals into waterways. Mercury poisoning, lung cancer, digestive system disorders, and decreased life spans are all possible for those who mine or those who live near the mine (Stephens & Ahern, 2001). Minerals and harmful contaminants can also enter our waterways through transportation. These hazardous materials are transported on forest roads with substantial risk for landslides, rockfalls, or avalanches (Jackson 2022). For a road about 16 miles long and next to a river, 45 possible spots for landslides, and 94 possible paths for an avalanche is absolutely unacceptable. The risk is outstanding, yet no care is given. Water contamination endangers countless lives downstream, and should be avoided at all costs. In addition to utilizing the water for drinking, people recreate in these ecosystems. They fish, hike, forage, mountain bike, kayak, rock climb, and backcountry ski just to name a few. It has been proven time and time again how important connection with nature is for maintaining mental health (Bratman et al. 2012). Communities surrounding the proposed mining site depend on the intact forest for recreation, positively impacting physical and mental wellbeing. Community health will suffer if the Stibnite Gold Project is completed.

I sincerely hope you have enough courage to avoid the same mistakes Colorado did 150 years ago. I urge you to stop the careless mining next to the South Fork Salmon, for the sake of community and ecological health. If the Stibnite Gold project must continue, I urge you to implement precautionary measures to mitigate contamination of rivers and the ecosystem, and to restore the ecosystem when finished. If this project is performed, Idaho residents will be stuck with contaminated water and disparaged ecosystems, just like Colorado. For the sake of healthy rivers and healthy communities, please stop the Stibnite Gold Project.

Imagine a world where you step outside your mountain home, take a deep breath, but the only thing you smell is smoke and sulfur. You look in the distance and see the scars of the mountainside, clouded by a thick black haze. The trees that once had cardinals, blue jays, and chickadees now lie barren. The silence is deafening. The creek that was once full of trout,

Chinook salmon, crawdads, and humpback chubs, is now permanently stained red and yellow, sterile and devoid of life. This is a world ravaged by the insatiable desire for gold. We live in a world where big industry makes a profit at the expense of human health, environmental health, and quality of life. I urge you to stop the Stibnite Gold Project, for the sake of public health and environmental health.

Thank you for your consideration,

Samuel Stone



### References

Bratman GN, Hamilton JP, Daily GC. 2012. The impacts of nature experience on human cognitive function and Mental Health. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1249:118–136.

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Moran RE, Wentz DA. 1974. Effects of metal-mine drainage on water quality in selected areas of Colorado, 1972-73. Circular No. 25.

Jackson L. Stibnite Gold Project Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement. 2022. Payette and Boise National Forests, ID: US Forest Service.

Stephens C, Ahern M. 2001. London: International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED).