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Organization: Norell Ranch

Title:

Comments: I am writing in regards to the Stibnight Gold EIS Scoping.

As a lifelong seasonal resident of the Yellow Pine area, I am deeply concerned about the Midas proposal to close the Stibnite road and the impact it will have on the local community. If road closure were to happen, access to thousands of acres of prime hunting, fishing and recreation opportunities via YP would be eliminated and could have a detrimental impact on this small community. Hunters, fishermen and the likes have always been able to count on Yellow Pine as a place of transition during their comings and going from travels to those areas past Stibnight. Reasonable access to popular destinations such as Thunder Mountain, Monumental Summit and Roosevelt Lake would be made increasingly challenging if this proposal were to be adopted.

The alternate public route up the existing but primitive road that goes alongside Riordan Creek and on up through Horse Heaven is greatly worrisome to me for a number of reasons. First, no matter how "good" the road is made for travel, it will always be limited to only four wheel drive vehicles due to the steepness of the terrain. This "alternative public route" therefore cuts off all access via horse trailers, two wheel vehicles, etc. severely limiting its value as "public access". Second, this road runs parallel and above Riordan Creek which then flows into Johnson Creek downstream. Johnson Creek is a tributary of the Colombian River and is home to migrating endangered wild chinook salmon, protected bull trout and is managed as a well known blue ribbon cutthroat fisheries. The steepness of the terrain, the unstable soil and past wild fires has made this area prone to erosion. The concern is, with any "road improvements" or increase in traffic up this corridor, an increase in erosion is likely to occur. This obviously could and would lead to excess soil depositing into Riordan Creek as well as Johnson Creek. What studies, if any, have been done to look at the effects of disturbing this fragile environment? Third, travel up and down the Riordan Creek Road is hazardous. It's steep grade and narrowness makes it a challenge for one way traffic, but that challenge becomes increasingly hazardous when two vehicles meet going in opposite directions. Fourth, the area surrounding this proposed "public access corridor" is a sanctuary for an abundance of wildlife. Disruptions and increase in human activity could have a detrimental impact on this wildlife.

While I have been skeptical of mining operations in the past, Midas has shown itself to be a responsible and up to now community minded organization and I find myself willing to support Midas' goal of mining in the Stibnight area. I however, do not support the proposed closing of the Stibnight road and am adamantly opposed to the proposed alternative public route going up Riordan Road and Horse Heaven.

This proposal not only locks us out of our own back yard it threatens the very existence of our community.

Thank you for this opportunity to offer my concerns regarding the Stibnight Gold EIS Scoping.

Respectfully,