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Comments: I'm writing to you today to voice my strong support for the Stibnite Gold Project proposal offered by Midas Gold. As someone who lives in the area and has a deep respect for the environment and local wildlife, it is my firm belief that the Stibnite Gold Project will yield not only economic, but environmental benefits now and for generations to come.

In particular, I think the proposal Midas Gold has put forward places environmental restoration front and center in its overall plans for development. Perhaps the biggest winners in the whole project are the populations of migrating fish that have been unable to access their historical spawning and nursing grounds for 80 years.

In 1938, the East Fork of the South Fork of the Salmon River was diverted to allow the mining of gold, tungsten, and antimony in the Yellow Pine pit. After mining operations ended, the river flowed back into the pit, but conditions made it impossible for local migrating fish, including the Chinook Salmon and Bull Trout. Currently, spawning is facilitated by collecting and stocking Meadow Creek-one of the river's tributaries-with adult salmon and leaving juvenile fish to navigate the treacherous, rocky passageway at Yellow Pine pit. When they return to spawn, the collection and stocking cycle must begin again. This is hardly a sustainable or practical solution.

Midas Gold has committed millions of dollars to design and operate a temporary tunnel to help these fish reach their spawning grounds without needing to be collected and stocked. This tunnel will be constructed at the beginning of the operations, enabling local fish populations to jumpstart their recovery sooner. Eventually, once operations are complete, the full restoration of the river would take place, starting with the backfilling of Yellow Pine pit and including the removal of multiple physical barriers to passage for fish. The environmental impact statement conducted by the U.S. Forest Service found that removing barriers to fish migration will benefit the local population. As noted in Chapter 4, free movement and access to habitat can improve genetic diversity of isolated populations (4 . 1 2-33 ).

It is for these reasons that I support the Stibnite Gold Project and believe it will help local fish thrive in the East Fork of the South Fork of the Salmon River once again. The U.S. Forest Service should accept Alternative Two and help move this vital project forward.