Data Submitted (UTC 11): 9/24/2020 6:00:00 AM
First name: William
Last name: Caldwell
Organization:
Title:
Comments: I am writing in reference to your August 2020 review of Stibnite Gold Project. Midas Gold has proposed new mining operations, which will include extensive environmental remediation and reclamation. I urge approval of Alternative 2 laid out in your draft environmental impact statement, as it is the most robust, environmentally friendly path forward for this unique project.

While the region enjoys great natural beauty and good fisheries, past mining operations have left numerous environmental trouble spots, such as the Yellow Pine pit, the West End pit, and Hangar Flats. I would like to highlight problems related to the 1965 failure of the dam, now known as Blowout Creek.

Because of the dam failure, unnatural amounts of sediment flow into the Salmon River every year. In addition to lowering water quality, the sediment places great stress on fish as well as the broader ecosystem. The sediment can clog gills and impair fish's ability to feed. Wetlands have been lost as well because the water table has fallen. Finally, the dam failure has left an ugly scar in the hillside.

Though Midas Gold will not be mining the Blowout Creek area, the company has committed in Alternative 2 to improving the area. A French drain will help reduce the flow of sediment into the Salmon River. A weir will raise the water table, restoring wetlands and reconstructing the stream.

Overall, Midas Gold's mitigation and restoration plans will provide measurable environmental benefits for the area-as the draft EIS has concluded. For example, the EIS finds that the restoration plans will provide a significant increase in stream functional units (Appendix D, Table 8-1) and the mitigation plans will increase wetland functional units (Appendix D, Table 8-2).

Finally, I would like to note that Alternative 2 provides clear advantages over the other options. Alternative 2 improves on Alternative 1 and provides for greater preservation and restoration of wetlands and salmon protection. Alternatives 3 and 4 entail delays that benefit no one and have changes that could hurt their environmental mission. For example, the DEIS states, that in Alternative 3 the TSF location would be placed in part on a large ancient landslide." That certainly does not make sense. Additionally, Alternative 5 would maintain the status quo, leaving the area without needed improvements.

Historic mining caused the environmental problems in the area, and we should applaud the fact that a mining interest is committed to righting these issues. The Midas Gold plan will preserve the area for the long term, while providing the economic benefits of our natural resources.

Thank you for your consideration of my views and for your work on this important matter. I look forward

to learning that the U.S. Forest Service will approve Alternative 2 without further delay or extension.