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Comments: Central Idaho is a beautiful place to live, work, and play, but our long history with mining has left some areas in a less-than-desirable state, environmentally speaking. The Stibnite-Yellow Pine region is a perfect example. That is why, when I reviewed the U.S. Forest Service's environmental impact report, I was very glad to see the lengths to which Midas Gold was going to prioritize environmental restoration and reclamation in Alternative 2.

There is a lot going on at the Stibnite mine. Local fish have been isolated from their historical spawning ground and feeding habitat due to the Yellow Pine Pit never being properly backfilled. The river and many of the waterways have exceedingly high levels of metals like arsenic and antimony due to exposed mining materials and waste in Meadow Creek Valley, threatening aquatic life. There is a massive erosion problem due to a dam failure more than 50 years ago, which has also drained the wetlands and creeks upstream. You get my point-action is long[shy] overdue to address the issues that have been getting worse for decades.

Midas Gold has already started restoring the environment even before this project has begun. They've planted more than 55,000 trees around the site, reclaimed more than 30 acres of land, and recycled 4,000 pounds of waste. If Alternative 2 of their plan is approved, then they will also help reconnect fish to parts of the river they haven't been able to access in years. They will clean up old mining materials and properly store them in a specially designed storage facility. And they will address the erosion and help restore the wetlands.

As your agency's report found, reclamation efforts outlined by Midas Gold would help a region that would otherwise not be able to recover from the legacy environmental issues that have developed there over time. As mentioned in Chapter 4 of the environmental impact report, it is not anticipated that soils in most of these areas would recover naturally. Further, environmental reclamation of some historically disturbed areas, also may be a long-term benefit that improves the productivity at the site and even minimizes the impact of climate change impacts from things like warmer temperatures, decreased snow pack, and lower stream flows.

One of the best things about Alternative 2 of is that it would allow for Midas Gold's restoration and reclamation work to begin sooner. In comparison, Alternative 4 would force an extension of the overall construction timeframe by at least two years, delaying any environmental progress. And Alternative 5 would basically be like throwing in the towel and giving up, since it would essentially mean leaving all of the environmental issues just as they are today.

Meanwhile, Alternative 3 would place the facility to store old mining materials in a less safe

place; in fact, the environmental report said it would be placed in part on a large ancient landslide.

The problems at the Stibnite mine have gone on long enough. I believe it is time to approve Alternative 2 and allow Midas Gold to begin its restoration efforts-much of which would happen in tandem with their development of the mine site. Thank you for taking the time to consider my comments on this issue.