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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I hope the U.S. Forest Service plans to approve the Midas Gold plan to reopen mining operations in the Yellow Pine area. Letting them go to work in the area would be the best chance we have of cost-effectively addressing the environmental problems threatening East Fork of the South Fork of the Salmon River fish runs.

Mining has been the problem on this river system in the past. Now it can be the solution. Midas Gold is a reliable, responsible corporate citizen with a 10-year track record of taking environmental preservation seriously in Yellow Pine. No other mining company that has operated in the region has ever done that before.

As Chapter 4 of your agency's EIS for this project indicates, there would be significant benefits for fish populations related to mining. Midas would build a tunnel that would allow fish to begin resuming spawning activity almost immediately. Then after the mining project was complete, they would restore the river flow to facilitate normal upstream runs. Midas would get the sediment out of the water and take other actions to support wild fish. All of this would be accomplished without spending one dime of Idaho taxpayers' money.

Of the five different plan options, Alternative Two is the best. It is an update of Alternative One based on important feedback from local community members, who are very supportive of rebuilding salmon runs. It can be accomplished faster than Alternatives Three and Four, cutting the time we would have to wait for project benefits to kick in and rushing aid to fish populations. As for Alternative Five, it does nothing but maintain the status quo which, I hope, is as unacceptable to the Forest Service as it is to those of us who live here.

It is simply tragic that we have let the environmental state of this river system continue to degrade for so many years. I firmly believe that we are at a tipping point. If we don't do something now, it could be too late to save this valuable Idaho water resource and the wild fish populations it supports. Please grant your approval of the Midas Gold Yellow Pine mining project.