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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear USFS Administrators of the Payette National Forest,

Regarding the proposed Stibnite Gold project on the South Fork of the Salmon River, the only appropriate course of action as detailed in the DEIS is Alternative 5 - No Action.

How could we think this is a good idea? It's the same old story - short-term economic gain (for a Canadian company, no less) in exchange for long-term economic downfall and environmental ruin on our public lands. The East fork of the South Fork of the Salmon is no place to be considering a MASSIVE series of open pit gold mines. The site is already basically an EPA superfund and you are considering letting a mining company come and tear up all of the existing remediation work? How many times have we heard this story? Will the USFS act surprised when Midas bails on their contractual, legal obligation to remediate the site and taxpayers are left to foot the bill of the enormous cleanup on their own public lands? I have never heard such a preposterous idea as the planned diversion tunnel around the Yellow Pine Pit. At nearly a mile long and featuring artificial lighting and riparian features only to let passing fish through to a stream damaged by the mine this idea is bound for failure. Putting a river into a tunnel is objectionable for a myriad of reasons but putting a river that is designated critical spawning habitat for three species of fish listed under the Endangered Species act is reprehensible.

Shall we talk about downstream effects? Lets start with the literal. The effects of the Stibnite Project aren't isolated to the East Fork of the South fork of the Salmon. Disregarding the fact that the river is already managed as suitable for a Wild and Scenic designation, the proposed mine will greatly impact the actual Wild and Scenic Salmon River. The Salmon is the second longest free-flowing river in the United States, home to fabled runs of Salmon and Steelhead that swim hundreds of miles from the pacific and one of the last strongholds of the Bull Trout within the country. The last thing this river and the communities that rely on it need is a giant mining project in its headwaters. The tailings dam in Meadow Creek will destroy crucial spawning habitat for the Salmonids. Increased levels of cyanide and heavy metals in the river will be detrimental to the ecology and economy of the area. It was a wildly inappropriate conflict-of-interest to let Midas complete their own Biological Assessment. The successful lobbying Midas has completed at the State and Federal level is alarming. They are even suing the you guys (the USFS) regarding their own pollution. Midas has already demonstrated they will do anything they can to squirm around regulations and their legal corporate responsibility. This will not stop if the proposed project becomes reality.

On to the more figurative downstream effects[hellip]. There is an entire community and economy and Native American tribe that depends on this river. The proposed project is a violation of the U.S. agreement with the Nez Perce. How about the towns of Stanley, Salmon, McCall and Riggins that rely on the tourism and industry the river creates. The Stibnite Project is an insult to the livelihood of these communities. The fishing and whitewater opportunities the Salmon River Watershed creates are unparalleled in the contiguous United States. Anything that jeopardizes these opportunities is an affront to the American Public. What would Frank Church have to say about this proposal?

I am a fly fishing guide, environmental consultant, and stake-holder of the San Miguel Watershed Coalition in Southwest Colorado. Last month I visited the Salmon for the first time and took a week-long float down the Main. I caught my first Bull Trout. We stayed in a hotel in Boise. Ate and shopped in McCall. Had rafts outfitted in Riggins. Even stopped for Pizza in Salmon. Not to mention the many gas stations we patronized along the way. I am completely sold and in love with the Salmon River and interior Idaho. This is a trip I plan on doing every fall. Hopefully we will pull a Middle Fork permit sooner than later and be able to link the two. This is the kind of economic stimulus the river deserves to provide. Do not jeopardize it with an ill-conceived, devastating series of open-pit mines.

Thank you,

Adrian Bergere

ATTACHMENT: Photograph of people fishing in a river