

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 10/13/2020 6:00:00 AM

First name: Buddie

Last name: Munday

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am writing today to express my wholehearted support for the project proposed by the Midas Gold company known as the Stibnite Gold Project and urge your swift approval of Alternative 2 as presented by the company and explored in the U.S. Forest Service's draft environmental impact statement.

The Stibnite Mining District has a long list of environmental problems dating back to the late 1930s when the Yellow Pine pit was left by past mining operations searching for antimony, tungsten, gold, and other materials. Ever since then, the rerouting of the East Fork of the South Fork of the Salmon River has meant local migratory fish populations have not been able to access parts of the River that were once their native spawning and rearing grounds. Because proper steps were not taken way back then, these fish are still unable to reach this vital habitat to this day. That has had an unfortunate impact on fish populations and made it so that the only way for fish like the Chinook Salmon to spawn is by stocking them in parts of Meadow Creek, which is a less than ideal solution.

To address this issue, Midas has included plans to reconnect fish to parts of the River that are upstream, in higher and cooler waters that are more suitable for spawning. As explained in Alternative 2, they will do this by first constructing an innovative fish tunnel that is nearly one mile long. The design for this tunnel is based on similar projects that have been successful around the world. All of this will happen within the first year of operations at the newly excavated pit so that local fish can begin rebuilding their populations at the same time that mining activity is happening.

Once mining is complete, Midas will backfill the Yellow Pine pit and restore this part of the East Fork of the South Fork of the Salmon River to recreate its natural, original conditions as much as possible. This will give fish permanent passageway to mile of historical spawning and rearing habitat that they have not seen in decades. Based on the draft environmental impact statement, doing so will be of great benefit for fish populations. Chapter 4 states that increased access to feeding and refuge areas in critical habitat can improve overall productivity.

Of all the options explored by the draft environmental impact study, only Alternative 2 takes the necessary precautions to keep the area protected for years to come in a timely fashion. That is why I am urging you to approve Alternative 2 and help push this project through the permitting process as quickly as possible.