

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 10/14/2020 6:00:00 AM

First name: Ron

Last name: Thiesson

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Please find below my comment regarding the proposed mining project in the Stibnite-Yellow Pine region of Central Idaho. I have been following this issue closely for a long time and, after reviewing the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), I believe Alternative 2 for the Stibnite Gold Project is the right solution to help remedy the environmental issues in this region, while also creating local jobs and contributing to local economies.

For generations, the environmental conditions in the Stibnite-Yellow Pine region have deteriorated to the point where much of the water is no longer suitable for fish, aquatic wildlife, or drinking. On top of that, local fish like our chinook salmon and steelhead have been deprived of access to what should be their native spawning and rearing habitat since the late 1930s, when the East Fork of the South Fork of the Salmon River (EFSFSR) was diverted to enable open pit mining at the Yellow Pine Pit.

Because nothing was done to backfill the pit, the sensitive fish populations are no longer able to swim upstream to spawn and reach feeding grounds. I was heartened to see that Midas Gold has included detailed plans in Alternative 2 for the Stibnite Gold Project to temporarily connect these migratory fish to miles of new streams that are more suited to spawning and rearing by designing a 0.9 mile-long tunnel. Leveraging best practices from similar systems used around the world, the tunnel would take into account the swimming speeds of different fish and use ambient lighting to ensure transitioning from the natural waterways to the tunnel passageway is as seamless as possible. Moreover, once the project has wrapped up, Midas Gold has committed to full restoration of the EFSFSR by backfilling the Yellow-Pine Pit and removing barriers to migration. As stated in Chapter 4 of the draft EIS, long-term access to historically blocked critical habitat would result in increased productivity (4.12-33).

The restoration plan and overall approach described in Alternative 2—which is the preferred solution for Midas Gold—offers the highest level of safety and ongoing environmental protection. Whereas Alternative 3 would place a storage facility for tailings from mining in a pristine, untouched reach of the Salmon River, Alternative 2 would keep it within the existing project footprint, helping limit further disruption of the local ecosystem. Compared to Alternative 4, Alternative 2 also reconfigures access roads to the site to reduce the chance of spills and minimize sedimentation in local waterways, both of which would threaten local fish populations.

Alternative 2 gives us our best chance to redevelop the Stibnite Mining District using a modern, 21st century approach while mitigating the past environmental damage done to the area. Please accept this option and help bring this much needed project to life.