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First name: Mike

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Organization: Montana Senate District 1

Title: Senator

Comments: I am a close neighbor and friend to Idaho with a 10 year record as a Montana legislator. I also have been a close observer and participant in the permitting and regulating process for several mineral extraction operations. Some great, some with issues. Mining has come a long way since my grandfather was the president of one of the largest mining unions in the northwest.

Just last week I helped to organize a tour of the old ASARCO mine not far from the Montana/Idaho border near Troy, MT. Some 45 years ago, I wrote news articles and shot photographs of this mine in the proposal stages. One week ago I stood upon the same ground which has gone the full life cycle, and the land is nearly fully reclaimed to wildlife habitat including endangered species. In fact, during the active mining stages, grizzly bear thrived above and around the mine site. This has been a great success story, and some naysayers from the early years have been complimentary of the recently completed project.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Stibnite Gold Project as part of the U.S. Forest Service's permitting process. I think you have the makings of a similar success story. I see this as a win-win proposal, probably in the no brainer category. Improved water quality, better or restored fishery, production of a rare mineral, improved economy for the entire northwest, correction of or improvement to earlier shortcomings, and more.

Certainly this is an important project for the real people of Valley County, and it will have a significant impact on the community. The Stibnite Gold Project can and will be done the right way.

From what I know, environmental safety and restoration will be front and center, just as it was at Troy Mine. The company is already composting and has further plans to help soils recover throughout the life of the project. Alternative 2 is the best option moving forward. It addresses the purpose and need of the agencies in a manner that provides environmental advantage and economic feasibility over the other analyzed alternatives. Alternative 5 should be removed from the table. There is finally an opportunity to restore the site and it is an opportunity that shouldn't be passed up.

It is time to move the Stibnite Gold Project forward under Alternative 2.