

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 10/26/2020 7:48:53 PM

First name: Maranda

Last name: Stopol

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Date submitted (Mountain Standard Time): 10/26/2020 3:35 PM

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To whom it may concern,

My name is Marand Stopol. I was born and raised in Idaho and have spent much of my life exploring rivers in our beautiful state, as well as around the world. I first experienced the South Fork of the Salmon River in utero when my mom kayaked the river back in 1994. Since then, I've navigated the South Fork of the Salmon's pristine waters many times on my own as a whitewater kayaker. As someone who has both experienced and observed the recreational benefits and pristine biodiversity of the South Fork and Main Salmon River downstream, I have serious concerns about the negative social and environmental impacts of this mine. I urgently ask that this proposal be reevaluated for the following reasons and I do not think it should be approved.

Habitat and Recreational Degradation:

The DEIS clearly states that all of the alternatives presented, apart from Alternative 5, would adversely affect federally listed endangered fish species, their habitat, and the watershed's water quality and quantity. This further negatively impacts economic vitality related to tourism and recreation of surrounding communities and those in Idaho who depend upon the integrated watershed of Salmon River systems and the hundreds of thousands of visitors each year to our National Forests. This number and economic benefits are growing immensely annually, with a recorded record number of visitors and related economic benefits in summer 2020.

Furthermore, I have serious concerns involving recreational impacts within the Payette River corridor as a result of heavy mine-related traffic moving along HWY 55, an already dangerous and congested roadway. This brings up a question of safety and concerns for heavy, toxic materials coming up and down this busy road via large trucks. How does Midas plan to mitigate this risk?

Need to Extend Comment Period:

Additionally, I am writing to request that the U.S.F.S. extend the comment period for the Stibnite Gold Project Draft EIS to the full 120 days. It is not reasonable to believe that the current comment period has been enough time for citizens, who are involved in their daily lives and dealing with COVID, engaging in the current hectic political environment just before a national election of great importance, to review this project and submit comments.

Similar mining proposals, such as the Pebble Mine DEIS 2019 (120 days), Rosemont Copper Mine DEIS 2011 (90 days), Idaho Cobalt Project 2007 (originally 60 days but was extended to 90 days in response to requests for additional review time), Thompson Creek Mine MMPO DEIS 2014 (modified mine plan of operations 90 days), have had comment periods at least twice as long.

There is evidence that Midas Gold Corp. and its subsidiary Midas Gold Idaho, Inc. have been pressuring members of the U.S. House of Representatives, other involved federal agencies, state lawmakers, and the USFS to approve this project in an expedited manner. Extending the comment period to 120 days will reassure the public that the USFS values the public's input, and is operating for OUR public lands, not for the benefits of special interests.

It is crucial to ensure that the public has the opportunity to engage in this process so the agency can make an informed decision based not only on private interests but also on the interests of the public landowners! At a minimum, the comment period should be extended to allow time to examine the enormous amount of information in the DEIS and at least match the comment periods of other similar mining project proposals.

As a concerned citizen and stakeholder who utilizes these public lands in their current undiminished state, lands or which I am an owner of and for which the Forest Service is directed to manage in the public interests, I reiterate that the issues with this must be addressed and this proposal must not be approved!

Thank you for considering public interest on such an important project. It cannot be overlooked. Thank you.

Best,
Maranda Stopol