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Comments: I am writing in support for permitting of the Stibnite Gold Project proposed by Midas Gold Idaho. The Stibnite Mining District has been home to mining projects from the 1800s to the 1990s with most operating in the absence of any state or federal environmental regulations. The area's fisheries and waterways are now paying the price and we are faced with a choice: do nothing or support a responsible, modern mining plan that will address the site's environmental legacies. My support is made in the context of realizing dam removal on the Snake River is a very remote possibility which is critical to salmon recovery and the investment in upstream environmental improvements by federal agencies, tribes, and environmental organizations has been insufficient over the past decades. The Midas Gold project investments will address existing problems and if joined by federal agency investments might actually address stream temperature problems, even in the face of climate change.

If no action is taken at the Stibnite Mining District, salmon will continue to be prevented from migrating upstream to the headwaters of the Salmon River for another 80 years and causing additional disruption to this key ecosystem. The millions of tons of tailings left behind by previous mining activity will continue to contaminate the area's waterways with arsenic and other metals if left unattended for an indeterminate amount of time. Finally, increased levels of sediment will continue to be pushed into the waterway, degrading water quality even more than it is now.

Contrast doing nothing to Midas Gold's proposal that addresses each of these issues. They will restore over 12 miles of the East Fork of the South Fork of the Salmon River and remove barriers keeping the local salmon and trout population from accessing their headwaters. Midas Gold will reprocess and properly store the remaining tailings in a state-of-the-art lined facility, thus preventing any water contamination. In order to stop large quantities of sediment entering the river system—and clogging fish gills—the company will install a rock drain at the site of a failed dam and rebuild the stream channel to keep the excessive sediment from getting into the river.

Allowing the Stibnite Mining District to suffer into further degradation makes no logical sense. When it comes down to it, inaction is simply not an option. For this reason, I encourage the U.S. Forest Service to adopt Alternative 2 and allow this project to move forward.