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Organization:

Title:

Comments:

My name is Gusti Laidlaw. I have raised a family, grown a business, and recreated extensively through camping, motorcycling, biking hiking, and kayaking, in the South Fork of the Salmon area for the last 40 years. I wish to address the access routes that Midas Gold has proposed to transport to and from the mine, as a citizen concerned not only for further financial burdens on taxpayers here but also for the safety of our populace and visitors.

The Burnt Log Road. Has this road been designed in sufficient detail that we can intelligently assess its impact on the environment? The current jeep trail drains into the Middlefork of the Salmon at several locations along the ridge-top adjacent to the largest wilderness area in the lower 48. What are the plans to prevent such a catastrophe should there be spillage from a wreck? This route is 8000 to 8600 feet above sea level - one of the highest routes in Idaho. What are the plans to keep this road open in winter for 65 vehicles per day? Do these plans include Magnesium Chloride, know to cause damage to the road surface, vehicular brakes, and plant life? This route is supposedly going to be a 5 to 7 percent grade. Massive amounts of earth will need to be moved to achieve this. This grading, plus the 20 some streams that need to be crossed, needs to be examined by scientists to assess potential damage to waterways. Have the designers take into account wildlife migratory paths? Should the road fail, or should there be spillages, is there a bond to clean up from such disasters? Who will be assuring that the construction process and construction camps are following environmental protective guidelines? We need a detailed design of the Burnt Log Road to assure safety for people, wildlife, and the environment. After my attempts to read the DEIS, I have not seen any of these questions addressed.

The Stibnite Johnson Creek Road. In April 2019, an avalanche followed by landslides, buried the Stibnite Road to depths of close to 100 feet in areas and closed access to the mine for close to a month. Photos show massive logs in the debris. Valley County was responsible for the repair. Apparently, the federal government will help with the expenses. Thus federal taxpayers, as well as Valley County taxpayers, are responsible for the bill. The understanding is that Midas Gold would upgrade and maintain the Stibnite and Johnson Creek roads during the time of mine operation. Is this plan in writing where responsibilities and protocols are clearly designated? How do they intend to prevent slides in the numerous avalanche chutes to keep the road open and the mile-long fish tunnel clear? Both the Midas Gold newsletter of May 2019 and the book 83 Miles of Hell by Duane Peterson state that weather and consequently slides are very difficult in that country.

How is Midas going to handle recreation traffic, particularly in winter? Johnson Creek is a popular snowmobile route. Can backcountry enthusiasts and ore trucks share the road? If Johnson Creek road is improved, who maintains the road after Midas leaves? Valley county is unable to clear all county roads at present. Repairs to the South Fork road at present are expansive and expensive. Johnson Creek costs would be stunning for the taxpayers.

The Warm Lake Road. The DEIS does not discuss clearly what happens on the Warm Lake Road. At present, it is plowed to Warm lake and is hugely popular with snowmobilers and backcountry skiers. The grade to Landmark is not plowed. That route has a grade of 13 percent in places, has sharp switchbacks, and a narrow crumbling road surface. Winter use by heavy ore trucks and magnesium chloride would further degrade this road. Who is responsible for improvements and repairs, and is any agreement in writing? Can campers and ore trucks safely negotiate this track together?

The DEIS states that the Warm Lake road has over 1,000 daily users, so the 65 Midas vehicles would be a small percentage of use. Where was that traffic counter placed? It seems particularly high as Johnson Creek tally is 57 users per day. Midas would double the use on that road. Do these percentages count when determining who pays for maintenance? Maintaining the Warm Lake road for 45 heavy ore trucks per day would be a huge burden to Valley County taxpayers. Especially since the South fork area is becoming more popular for recreation and tourism, and we must have a safe corridor for all to travel on.

HWY 55. Does Idaho Transportation Department have a written agreement with Midas as to who is responsible for improvements and maintenance of HWY 55 during construction and mine activities? Has the entrance into and exit from McCall been designed? Can we keep locals and tourists with Midas traffic once every 10 to 15 minutes? It has been noted that HWY 12 required resurfacing after the "mega load" traffic. Has the impact of 45 ore-trucks, heavier than log trucks, on the road surface, particularly with the use of magnesium chloride, been calculated? Do mining taxes cover all these expenses?

Thank you in advance for responding to my inquiries. As a citizen concerned about taxes and more importantly safety, I respectfully submit my comments.