

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 10/27/2020 6:00:00 AM

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Title:

Comments: Wild and Free South Fork Salmon River

As an individual who values the rivers and spectacular recreational resources of Idaho, I am writing to support Alternative 5, the No Action Alternative outlined in the Stibnite Gold Project's Draft Environmental Impact Statement. My family has been residents of the Salmon River drainage since 1876 and my experience with the drainage began by hearing my grandfather tell stories of the massive number of Chinook Salmon that made their migration up the South Fork Salmon River. As an elementary school teacher, I share the knowledge of this special place with my students as we travel to South Fork Weir near the headwaters of the South Fork Drainage every August/September to witness the spawning of the few wild salmon that return. These are the same salmon that we need to protect to aid in the repopulation of this species.

I have also spent the last twenty years recreating in and round the East Fork of the South Fork of the Salmon river. This area has provided me with world class kayaking, snowmobiling, skiing, biking, hiking, fishing, and camping. The DEIS fails to take into consideration the economic benefit of these recreational activities, that in the long run, will far outweigh a boom and bust mining operation. I feel we need to invest in these recreational opportunities by protecting the water and air quality, fish, wildlife, and soils. Allowing a foreign mining company, like Midas Gold to come in and negatively impact these resources will be detrimental to the environment and way of life in Idaho.

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. It is incredibly important to me personally that the Forest Service protect the outstanding water quality of this major tributary to the Wild and Scenic Salmon River, as this river system is vitally important for native and endangered fish, outdoor recreation, and the economic vitality of the local communities that surround it. Moving forward with this project would not only adversely impact my personal enjoyment of this public resource through whitewater paddling, camping, fishing, skiing, it would negatively impact all of the people of Idaho who rely on the hundreds of thousands of visitors each year to our National Forests.

One of the biggest concerns is the potential for acid generating rock and metals leaching into the surface and affecting the groundwater. In the DEIS modeling it is not taken into consideration that the faults and fracture zones present in the area will have a potentially significant influence on groundwater movement and quality. With recent earthquakes in the area there is also concern of a catastrophic contamination of streams that would extend throughout the Salmon River drainage downstream. How can we be sure that Midas, or whatever company that mines the site, will put money into a trust fund that will "treat surface water in perpetuity," as the plan indicates. What about the groundwater? Will that also be treated? Furthermore, the amount of traffic from new roads and the risk of chemical spills into nearby streams would contribute to more sediment entering the stream and causing a risk to the fish populations.

The most assured way of protecting the fish populations will be to restore the historical mine and protect the undisturbed habitat that Midas hopes to mine. Don't put mining waste - new or old - or build new roads- in undisturbed habitat. Don't conduct activities that are likely to mobilize additional arsenic such as blasting waste rock and grinding rock into tailings. Don't bring millions of gallons of diesel fuel, cyanide, and other chemicals to the site. Do reconnect habitat, isolate historic mine waste from streams, and restore degraded riparian areas.

The South Fork Salmon River is finally healing from the scars of past mining activity and the impacts of expanded mining activity represents an unacceptable risk to this watershed.

Midas Gold's proposed mine would undermine all the time, effort, and money that the Nez

Perce Tribe, Fish and Game, and Forest Service have put into restoring the land, air, and water quality of this area. In order to manage this public land for which I am a stakeholder it is in the public's best interest that the Forest Service take alternative 5, the "No Action Alternative" to Midas Gold's proposed mine.