

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 10/28/2020 6:00:00 AM

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Comments: As a Montanan, an elected official, and a member of the House Natural Resources Committee, I am no stranger to the importance of the mining sector to our region. Mining powers our economy, supports families, strengthens communities, and creates opportunity [ndash] just as it has for generations.

With that said, I have also seen firsthand the damage that can be caused by mining that doesn[rsquo]t make the most of modern technology, state of the art best practices, exhaustive environmental regulations, and financial assurance requirements. Legacy mining sites scattered across our region are environmental blights and demonstrate just how far modern mining has come over the last several decades.

The Stibnite Gold Project, proposed in neighboring Idaho, will represent the best of what modern mining has to offer. If approved, the project can play an important role in the new era of modern mining the United States must embrace to maintain its global competitiveness. It will spur over a billion dollars in investment in Idaho and support communities through the creation of hundreds of jobs and significant tax revenue.

The project would also enable the United States to begin significant mining of antimony, a strategically vital critical mineral that our nation currently does not produce domestically today. This would enable us to reduce our reliance on critical minerals imported from China and other foreign nations [ndash] a goal anyone should be able to support.

These benefits, while significant, aren[rsquo]t the only reasons to support the project. Mining has to be done right, and this project meets every possible threshold.

I appreciate the fact that, in addition to the lengthy NEPA review provided by the U.S. Forest Service, the Stibnite Gold Project will also be required to comply with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations, including those governing financial assurance. In addition to a positive record of decision through the NEPA process, the Stibnite Gold Project will require up to 50 other permits, approvals and conditions ranging from the Clean Water Act to providing financial assurances for restoration to be held the government. The project cannot move forward without all these approvals and conditions met.

I am perhaps most encouraged about the fact that this project is being driven by more than the letter of the law. Beyond meeting all applicable permitting standards as outlined above, Midas Gold[rsquo]s private investment is also an opportunity to deal with difficult legacy materials, safety hazards and environmental problems left behind at the Stibnite Mining District. Reclamation has eluded the Stibnite Mining District for many years owing to a lack of either public or private funding sources.

The reclamation work examined in the draft environmental impact statement and proposed by Midas Gold is not required by any law or regulations. But the company has been proactive in recognizing the positive impact they can make by embracing an opportunity to apply modern mining practices to repair problems caused in the past. Midas Gold designed the project with restoration and reclamation as primary design standards because it is the right thing to do.

In a vacuum, the circumstances undeniably warrant approval of what promises to be a project that benefits both the economy and the environment. Despite the merits, though, some environmentalists have voiced opposition to the project based [ndash] it seems [ndash] on outdated perception of mining. Modern mining can be done safely and responsibly, and it is essential to a

strong economy. What[rsquo]s more, I am concerned that the benefits of reclamation of a legacy site will be lost if this project is resisted on outdated ideological grounds.

It is my firm belief that modern mining and technology play an essential role in funding and executing the cleanup of legacy mining sites. In resisting this project, environmentalists are doing more than threatening economic opportunity. They are also imperiling their own goals by making it far less likely that a notorious legacy mining site will be reclaimed.

I thank the U.S. Forest Service for their thorough and comprehensive examination of this natural resources project. I also strongly urge you to recognize the importance of the opportunity at hand to strengthen our economy and our environment through this important project. Please adopt Alternative 2 as outlined by Midas

Gold Idaho in their modified Plan of Operations and Restoration.

Thank you,

Steve Gunderson Montana House District 1 Libby, MT