

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 12/30/2022 9:06:53 PM

First name: Steve

Last name: Zettel

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Comments on the Stibnite Gold Project

To Whom It May Concern,

For the past 43 years I have been a guide, an outfitter, raised my family and recreated in the area in and around the project area. Needless to say, I know the area, the routes and the implications intimately. Mining is an essential industry and I support the notion when necessary and done responsibly. This project appears to be neither. There are no national crises for more gold and/or silver, and the prospect of antimony is simply a smoke screen for a chosen few to get wealthy by getting to the gold.

Neither side of the argument should use ridiculous arguments for or against, such as wolverines or antimony. These sorts of arguments just delegitimize the real issues, which should be the real focus. My comments are as follows:

Wildlife: There will be effects on local wildlife but very little will have to do with the actual mine footprint. Animals simply move over, and the land mass we are talking about is insignificant compared to the millions of acres of National Forest and Wilderness adjacent to it. What WILL have a huge negative effect on the local wildlife is the hundreds to thousands of mine/construction workers new to the area. These folks "will" recreate in this newfound area of theirs, and they WILL bring friends and family. Hunting, poaching, ATVs, increased road and trail traffic, domestic dog interaction, camping, associated wildfire, trapping, fishing, poisoning (with malice or by accident) and more, will all have a huge negative impact on the local wildlife.

Fish: Wild Salmon numbers are at all-time lows. The remaining populations are extremely fragile. 20+/- billion dollars have been spent to recover them, and you are considering a nonessential project of this magnitude, which could not be more detrimental to wild salmon than if it was the actual goal. Filling critical salmon spawning ground with overburden, forever!? How can this be at all a consideration? I have spent more than 40 years dealing with Forest Service regulations dealing with sediment, riparian zones, endangered salmon, steelhead and bull trout. They have written me up, moved my corals, my camps, their own trails, carved out miles of dangerous sidehill trails in lieu of beautiful creek bottom passages, all in the name of salmon recovery, and none of it helped the salmon one iota. (I invite you to read "Welcome to Salmon-less Idaho" attached). And yet, you are considering a project like this. It is no less than criminal.

Sport fishing in the area can't help but be negatively impacted by the sheer number of new folks to the area.

I am no expert on chemicals or mine safety practices when it comes to those chemicals. I do know they can be dangerous and would be used in the volumes that could cause horrific results to the water and all who live in it. I also know that accidents happen, all of the time. Why would we risk so much for so little? As I stated above, we have already spent more to recover salmon than this mine is projected to produce.

Social: As a local employer, I am apposed to an artificial employment need being created in the area. There is no shortage of jobs in the area, the state, or the nation. Artificially and unnecessarily creating this many jobs, while displacing this many folks to a rural area such as this could be catastrophic to some local businesses and employers. Not to mention the additional price, literal and metaphorical, locals will have to pay for potentially compromised services. Local employers will certainly lose employees to a project such as this. Most employers can't find folks to work the available jobs as it is. Job creation in this decision-making process should be considered as a negative, not a positive.

I have already addressed what the influx of this many folks to a unique area like this will do to fish and wildlife. The same negative effects will be spread across all the local natural resources. People love nature to death, and we are talking a lot of people.

Has anyone questioned the potential crime-effects of having this many folks infused into small towns like Yellowpine, Cascade, Donnelly and McCall? There are plenty of good folks in the mining industry, but the historic rough nature of transient mine/construction workers cannot be denied. I know because I once was one. Many crimes have long lasting affect on small communities such as these. Just the potential infusion of illegal narcotics can change a small town forever.

The Road: The Johnson Creek Road, Yellowpine Main Street, the Yellowpine Bypass and the East Fork of the South Fork Road, always have been, are, and always will be mining roads. There is no reason to construct a new road which would only create a different rout to a place already accessible by the roads mentioned above. Yellowpine is a mining town. We can all pretend it isn't, but it is. Mining towns both benefit and pay a price for being such. Mine traffic is one such benefit or detriment, depending on who's opinion you listen to. This is no different than someone moving next to a dairy and then saying they want the farmer to go away because of the smell. People who choose to live in a mining town and then don't want mine traffic, should not be able to dictate the creation of miles and miles of new road in Roadless designated areas to somehow avoid historic mine traffic.

Wilderness: I believe in wilderness boundaries. Wilderness rules should be limited to wilderness. My operating area is within the FCRNRW adjacent to the project. The Big Creek and Lick Creek trail heads are not far away. There is no doubt that an infusion of this man people to an area like this, will create some issues with respect to those trail heads and the accessible wilderness. Right or wrong, folks coming to enjoy an historic week in the tranquility of wilderness certainly don't expect to see 500 mine workers, massive amounts of heavy equipment, toxic chemical signs and such moments before they "saddle up". And then spend a week with me while I explain all of the rules, we must follow to protect the "Salmon", like camping away from the stream, dispensing soap correctly, travel on horseback on dangerous sidehill trails, avoiding potential salmon redds, catch and release fishing regulation, not allowing our horses to drink or eat near the potential Salmon areas. Only to end their stay by driving through the project where they get to witness toxic chemicals in use, unnatural Salmon stream reroutes, massive sediment potential, massive dump trucks filling in salmon spawning beds, forever!

Idaho Wilderness Company: there is no doubt that my business and my clientele will suffer as a result of this project moving ahead. It would be dishonest of me to try and speculate and quantify the potential loses, but they will be real.

Nothing bad (besides someone(s) lack of profit) will happen if this project does not move forward. Countless bad things will happen, (many of these results would last forever) and many others could, if it does. There is no reason for this project to ever proceed.

Steve Zettel / Idaho Wilderness Company
208-879-4700
Po Box 795
Challis ID 83226