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Comments: The environmental strife going on in the Stibnite-Yellow Pine region has always been a great concern to me. I'll admit to being skeptical when I heard that another mining company wanted to redevelop this area, but after seeing how forthright and transparent Midas Gold has been in their efforts to involve local communities, I now believe their proposal offers the most hope the environment in this area has had in years.

Perhaps the saddest thing about this region is that, due to the mining activities that took place long ago and without today's stringent regulations, the quality of life for local fish and wildlife has been greatly reduced. This is particularly true for the namesake of the Salmon River, our local chinook salmon, as well as the other native fish. Ever since the East Fork of the South Fork of the Salmon River was rerouted way back in 1938, these fish have been unable to access their historical spawning grounds and vital rearing, feeding, and refuge habitats.

Despite the river being returned to its original route, efforts were never made to fill in the yellow pine pit, so today, the river flows right over it. That makes it impossible for fish to get past, and now the only way to facilitate spawning for salmon is by periodically restocking them in the Meadow Creek Valley. I was heartened to see that Alternative 2 of Midas Gold's plan for the Stibnite Gold Project would help address this issue.

First, the company would build a specially designed tunnel to connect fish to miles of new stream for feeding, finding refuge, and even spawning. This would all happen at the beginning of operations so the fish can get a head start on revitalizing struggling populations. Then, once mining operations have concluded, Midas Gold would backfill the yellow pine pit and remove obstacles to migration so these fish are reconnected with their native spawning grounds once and for all.

According to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, all these efforts would help local populations of fish immensely. In chapter 4.12, it states that free movement and access to habitat can greatly improve genetic diversity of isolated populations . When it comes down to it, Alternative 2 is the best option because it would enable the restoration work to begin much sooner than the other alternatives.

For all these reasons, I believe the U.S. Forest Service should approve Alternative 2. I hope you will agree