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First name: Tanner

Last name: Haskins

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Please do not approve the Midas Gold Stibnite Mining project!

As a local Central-Idahoan, fisherman, hunter, and rafting guide, Idaho's pristine waters and wild spaces are infinitely valuable to me. Indeed, healthy wild ecosystems are valuable to all of us as they balance, maintain, and support a healthy world around us. In short, I believe that opening a mine at the headwaters of such a unique and valuable river would be another disastrous step in the wrong direction. As we fragment these wild spaces the plants and animals that rely on those untouched areas for survival are weakened, and sometimes disappear. It is foolhardy for us to pretend that those effects do not impact us as well. The South Fork Salmon once supported the largest salmon run of all the Colombia river's tributaries with the Colombia's run being the world's largest. Thus, the South Fork Salmon was once some of the greatest wild salmon habitat on earth. Unfortunately, as dams, logging, mining, and numerous other factors have combined to decimate wild salmon runs in the Pacific Northwest, we are seeing detrimental effects firsthand both up close and far away. Our forests growing in central Idaho's largely sandy, granitic soil once depended on the salmon transporting nutrients from the ocean to help them grow. Now, weakened, the trees are more susceptible to bark beetles, climate change, drought, and fire. Further afield, Orca whales are in danger of disappearing now that the salmon which once made up the majority of their diet are gone. Today, scientists understand that removing "keystone" species from an ecosystem can cause total ecologic collapse. Both Orcas and salmon are keystone species and we are well on our way to the catastrophic collapse of this natural system. This collapse is easy to ignore due to our extremely short-term view point and is temporarily staved off in part by tottering band-aid solutions such as our salmon hatchery system. Let us not forget that as recently as the 1950's, anglers were pulling 50 pound salmon from the Salmon River and its tributaries as far upstream as Stanley. The value of Alaska's salmon fishing industry is estimated at \$774 million dollars annually (Source: Alaska Daily News). Most of that money ends up in the pockets of the people of Alaska and is sustainable for perpetuity. How much money will the Midas Gold (a Canadian-owned corporation) project bring to Idaho, and for how long? Will taxpayers ultimately pay the price to clean up the mine long after the company has left? While denying the development of this mine will not bring back the salmon, permitting it to operate at the headwaters of the best salmon habitat in the world would be a death sentence to the idea that salmon could ever one day repopulate the river. Already woefully damaged and slowly and painfully restored after poor logging practices choked the river with silt preventing salmon spawning, the South Fork Salmon cannot take much more before it is permanently uninhabitable for salmon. Just one more incident, perhaps a mining spill similar to the one on the Animas river in Colorado (2015) could spell the end. We must remember that such a disaster does not stay contained, in time all the contaminated water makes it's way downstream to the Snake and Colombia rivers eventually flowing past population centers such as Portland.

In summary, the Midas Gold Stibnite project would be a step backwards into the past, another boom and bust relic of Idaho's former extraction based economy which we have largely left behind. Indeed, Idaho has the west's fastest growing economy thanks to our growth in tech and other industries while our neighbors whose economies are still extraction based remain on the bottom of the barrel. Denying development of the Midas Gold Stibnite project would be a step towards ensuring that a plentiful salmon run could one day again inhabit the Colombia river basin benefitting the entire Pacific Northwest ecosystem, the people who live there, and their economy as a whole.

Many thanks for considering these thoughts.

Tanner