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Comments: Thank you for taking the time to listen to the input of residents of central Idaho concerning proposed mining activities in the Stibnite region, located in the Boise National Forest. Midas Gold has proposed a robust, multi-year mining operation, the Stibnite Gold Project (SGP). The company's modified plan, designated "Alternative 2" in the U.S. Forest Service's Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), is the best choice for central Idaho.

Over the course of several years, Midas Gold will extract primarily gold and antimony from the Stibnite area. Its activities will include reprocessing materials left by previous mining operations, as well as new excavation. By themselves, these activities will provide economic and employment benefits to the area. The company has credibly projected the creation of hundreds of jobs for construction and mining operations. The economic impact on the region will be significant as well.

As important, Midas Gold has approached this project with environmental protection and remediation front of mind. The company has laid out an extensive plan to repair past mining damage to the Stibnite area and minimize the impact of its own operations. This plan will benefit the community as well as wildlife, especially fish populations.

As a key component of its plan, Midas Gold will restore fish passage on the East Fork of the South Fork of the Salmon River. Admirably, the company is not waiting until mining operations are complete. In the first year of the project, the company will build a temporary fish tunnel that will enable fish to reach the upper Salmon River for the first time in more than 80 years. When mining operations are completed, the tunnel will be deactivated and decommissioned, and the original channel will be restored.

As the DEIS notes, creating river connectivity by removing barriers, "allows for free movement and access to habitat for both upstream and downstream fish and, in turn, can improve [middle] genetic diversity of isolated populations, improve overall productivity by increasing access to critical habitat, and improve access to feeding and refuge areas" (p. 4.12-39). These positive impacts outweigh potential negative impacts, per the DEIS.

Restoring connectivity for fish will be just one benefit of Alternative 2. Midas Gold's revised plan also includes cleanup and storage of mining waste, which will improve water quality-again helping fish populations. The company will also restore the area blighted by the dam failure on the East Fork of Meadow Creek (Blowout Creek). This will lower sediment levels, again to the benefit of fish.

The environmental benefits of Alternative 2 clearly meet "Purpose and Need for Action" requirements as described in the DEIS (1.4.1). Alternative 2 is also technically and economically feasible. In this regard, I would underscore that Midas Gold will be required to provide financial assurance for completing its program of environmental restoration (DEIS 2.3.7.16).

Clearly the benefits of Alternative 2 outweigh potential negative impacts. In addition, by repairing past mining damage, Alternative 2 provides a more positive environmental impact than Alternative 5-which would leave the Stibnite area in its current condition. Please approve the application for Alternative 2 without additional delay.