

U.S. Forest Service, Payette National Forest
Linda Jackson, Payette Forest Supervisor
500 North Mission Street
McCall, ID 83638

Dear Ms. Jackson,

On behalf of the Idaho Freedom Foundation, I am writing today to urge your support for the proposed new development at the Stibnite Mining District as outlined by Midas Gold Idaho in Alternative 2 of the draft Environmental Impact Statement. Our organization believes this private-sector investment in our state will help strengthen Idaho's economy and help put people back to work at a time when many rural communities are struggling to survive. I ask that you add these comments to the U.S. Forest Service's open docket on this issue.

From a purely economic standpoint, the proposed Stibnite Gold Project could be a game changer for Idaho. Now more than ever, as many communities continue to reel from the recent economic downturn, we need this kind of private investment.

By working with local vendors, suppliers, and contractors, the company has already spent more than \$89 million in Idaho. It has invested hundreds of thousands of dollars of its own money into improving our roads and infrastructure around the site of the proposed development, both enhancing safety for Idahoans and protecting the waterways from runoff and sedimentation. All of this investment is happening before the actual project has even been approved.

According to Midas Gold Idaho's plan for restoration and operations, the project would directly employ over 500 Idahoans, with annual payroll in the millions during the construction phase alone. During operations of the mine, it would provide hundreds of jobs for the community, with annual payroll of about \$50 million. These are the kind of good-paying jobs that rural Idahoans need.

In addition to the employment opportunities provided by this project, the company would also provide Idaho with vital tax revenue, which would circulate right back into our communities. This is revenue that could help lower property taxes and offset the need for tax increases by local governments.

Positive economic benefits aside, the proposed Stibnite Gold Project would also help Idaho regain its leadership role in the development and production of antimony, which has the distinction of being considered a critical mineral for its use in the national defense, energy, and aerospace industries. Throughout World War II, Stibnite was a boon for antimony production, with the site accounting for roughly 90 percent of our nation's total antimony supplies.

Now, however, there is virtually no domestic production or strategic stockpile of this mineral. Sadly, America remains reliant on foreign sources like China, Russia, and Tajikistan to meet our antimony needs, but the Stibnite Gold Project could change all of that. This area is still home to the largest-known antimony deposit in the United States. The Stibnite Gold Project would not only position Idaho as a national leader in the production of antimony, but it would help

strengthen our national security by easing our reliance on foreign sources to access this critical mineral.

Critics of this project seem to be stuck with a misconception of what a modern mining operation looks like. The 21st century mining industry is subject to some of the highest standards in safety and environmental protection. Midas Gold has worked in close collaboration with local, state, and federal agencies to ensure proper oversight and permitting, including obtaining more than 50 permits for various environmental, safety, and regulatory standards.

Of course, there are also immense environmental benefits that go along with this project, as that has been one of the primary concerns of local residents for years. Midas Gold Idaho has built its plan for redevelopment around the need to restore and reclaim the environment surrounding the site. They have included in-depth plans to address poor water quality, clean up legacy waste and used mining materials, and help restore local fish and wildlife habitats.

There are a multitude of benefits that await Idaho's workers, businesses, and overall economy once this project is allowed to proceed. Please help realize the potential the Stibnite Gold Project has to offer by approving Alternative 2 without delay.

Sincerely,

Fred Birnbaum
Director of Legislative Affairs
Idaho Freedom Foundation