

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

Ms. Jackson:

The ongoing environmental fallout from decades upon decades of loosely regulated mining activity in the Stibnite Mining District has led to water conditions that are not only unsuitable for drinking water, but hazardous to local aquatic wildlife and fish. It is time for something to be done about this and I believe the environmental reclamation and restoration plans in the proposal by Midas Gold Idaho for the Stibnite Gold Project offers the perfect solution.

Today, more than 10 million tons of spent ore and unlined tailings have accumulated in the Meadow Creek Valley from previous mining projects. After years of sampling, testing, and monitoring the water supply, Midas Gold has found this to be a likely source for the high levels of metal leaching into the Salmon River and other waterways. In some areas has elevated the level of arsenic to more than 700 times higher than drinking water standards.

That is why Midas Gold has proposed to not only pick up all the legacy tailings and spent ore, but also reprocess and properly store the tailings in a tailings storage facility (TSF) specially engineered to prevent further breaching, leaking, or accumulation of water. The spent ore would then be reused underneath the TSF liner and above the ground-water level so that it permanently unable to interact water. This, according to the first environmental impact statement conducted by the U.S. Forest Service would help the local ecosystem immeasurably. In chapter 4, the draft EIS says removing legacy tailings and waste improves water quality in Meadow Creek Valley. The DEIS also finds the Midas Gold plans for this important facility will meet necessary standards and is safe, especially if there was a natural event like an earthquake. Chapter 4 says, "failure of the TSF dam from a seismic event is considered to have extremely low probability." (4.2.2.1.4.1)

Midas Gold's plan as detailed in Alternative 2 is an improvement upon Alternative 1 with modifications that protect more fish habitat and increase other safeguards to protect the environment. Alternative 2 also sites the new TSF in a much safer location than Alternative 3, keeping it within the existing footprint of the project instead of placing it in a new, untouched part of the Salmon River. And both Alternative 3 and Alternative 4 would result in lengthy delays. And, In my opinion, Alternative 5 shouldn't even be considered as the worst thing we could do is to do nothing.

For all these reasons, I urge you to approve Alternative 2 and help ensure this project gets off the ground as soon as possible. Thank you for your time and consideration to this matter.

Sincerely,
Sharon Byler