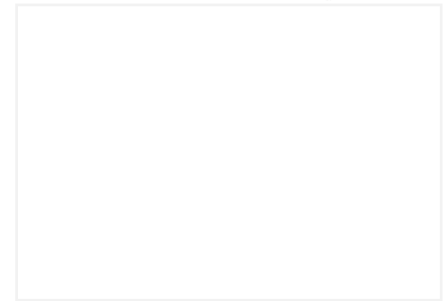




**GRANITE**  
**Excavation Inc,**  
**Cascade, ID**  
We're Diggin This Business



Rusty Bentz



Website: [www.graniteexcavation.com](http://www.graniteexcavation.com)

September 18, 2020

Attention Ms. Jackson,

Midas Gold Idaho has been a valued member of our community for the past decade earning the respect of many as their employees became wonderful champions and supporters of the region. The company has a well-earned track record of following through on its promises and doing the right thing. As a project manager with a locally owned business working closely with their team, I know first-hand how committed they are to Valley County and to Idaho. All of this gives me tremendous confidence to urge the Forest Service to permit Alternative 2 in the draft EIS for the Stibnite Gold Project.

My company, Granite Excavation Inc., employs roughly 100 people throughout Idaho. We've been happily working with the team of Midas now for years as the company moves through the permitting process for this project. From the outset, I was thrilled to hear about Midas' commitment to hiring locally, and using local vendors whenever possible. With hundreds of new jobs at stake both during construction and the operational stages of the project, this will be an economic boon for the region. Many of these jobs, with estimated salaries near \$80,000 per year, will be more than double what most wages pay. Additionally, a recent study found that the overall impact from local job creation will be nearly \$30 million annually in local income during construction and each year of operations. That would be a significant financial investment in the region.

I also believe the project presents the best plan to repair the environment at Stibnite – particularly given the steps Midas outlined under Alternative 2. Historic mining operations have resulted in significant degradation of many elements of the local environment. Poor water quality, loss of fish passage, and excessive erosion are all of great concern to our community and for nearly 100 years these problems have essentially been left unchecked. The Stibnite Gold Project would finance reclamation efforts to address these problems and in turn boost Idaho's economy. It is a win-win for our community.

Finally, and this point has been lost in some of the debate, is that this project will immediately help to lessen our reliance on places like Russia and China for the critical mineral antimony. One of 35 critical minerals, it's used in millions of things and has daily practical applications as fire retardant, in the energy space and in numerous military products. And according to the U.S. Geologic Survey, there was no antimony produced in the U.S. in 2019. I for one would like us to be less reliant on China for a mineral the Department of Defense deems critical to our national security.

I understand there are a lot of factors to weigh when considering a project of this magnitude, and that I'm but one of thousands of comments you'll receive during this process. I appreciate your due diligence in really reviewing the work Midas has done to date and the plan they've

compiled over the years seeking feedback from the community and incorporating those thoughts into the plan you review today. They've demonstrated to me, and my family, just how committed they are to Valley County even launching – and funding - a foundation the local communities will serve on to determine ways to invest some of the project's yearly profits back into improving our region.

I hope the U.S. Forest Service will realize the benefits this project and permit the Stibnite Gold Project using Alternative 2.

Thank you for your time,

Sincerely,

Rusty Bentz

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rusty Bentz", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.