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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Payette National Forest,

I am writing in objection to the permitting of Midas Gold's Stibnite Mine.

I spend my summers guiding the Lower Salmon out of McCall, ID. My family has lived in Idaho for generations and deeply values the Salmon River. I object to the Stibnite Mining Project because I believe it will have long term adverse effects on the entirety of the Salmon River.

Midas Gold claims their project will restore the landscape to pre-mine conditions but historically, this is impossible. I am aware of no instances where an open pit mine has left an environment in better shape than before. I am however familiar with several, recent instances where mines have wreaked havoc on the nearby environment. In 2015, a human error caused tailings left by the Gold King Mine to flood the Animas River in Colorado. Heavy metals tainted the river and neighboring communities (including the Navajo Nation) were advised to not use the river's water. In 2014, the tailing pond at the Mount Polley Mine in Canada broke and flooded the nearby waterways with toxic tailing remnants, causing a nearby lake to rise 5 feet. These are just a few of hundreds of tailing floods that have occurred since 1960.

These examples illustrate that tailing storage sites are far from infallible. As indicated in the environmental report, the area around the proposed Stibnite is especially volatile. Avalanches, land slides, and earthquakes are frequent events. The 6.5 magnitude earthquake occurring on March 31st, just east of the proposed mine site indicates that the area is geologically active. A large earthquake could easily rupture a tailing pond.

Midas Gold has marketed their mine as a way to restore the river and the historical spawning grounds near the mine. However, their comments and actions prove that they have no real interest in environmental restoration. In reference to their lawsuit against the Forest Service, the CEO stated: "This [lawsuit] was a necessary step to protect Midas Gold from being held responsible for alleged water pollution from lands owned and managed by the U.S. Forest Service." While Midas Gold claims they will restore and rectify damage from the old mine, the CEO's statement reveals the company has no interest in taking responsibility for past mining actions. Instead, it seems that if Midas Gold can build off an already-existing mine, they can ultimately deflect responsibility and damage at the end of the project.

Even if Midas Gold restores the spawning grounds, these spawning grounds account for just a fraction of the spawning grounds along the Salmon River and its tributaries. If a tailing storage failure contaminates all the waterways downstream of the mine, it does not matter if the spawning grounds upstream of the mine are healthy.

Thank you for your time,

-Jasper Vanspoore