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Comments: I am writing in OPPOSITION to the Midas Gold Stibnite Open Pit Mine.

I could write some flowery language about how this Wild and Scenic River needs to stay wild, how this watershed is sacred to the generations of Native Americans who call it home and to so many who have recreated there, and how the fish deserve to be protected. I agree with all of these arguments, but it seems many others have made similar statements, so I will offer a different point of view.

I believe that Midas Gold may have the best intentions in mind. They claim to clean up an old, existing pit that is itself an environmental hazard, and that they have plans in place to mitigate environmental impact as much as possible, while bringing significant economic growth to the local communities. I don't doubt that these are sincere promises to protect this fragile ecosystem and benefit the local economy.

However, I believe that as long as humans are involved in such an intricate process of tearing up the land to gather resources, human error will always result in significant environmental degradation. I grew up in Louisiana, where BP Oil dumped millions of tons of crude oil into the Gulf of Mexico, severely compromising the delicate ecosystems and crippling the shrimping businesses. I have seen the oil refineries in Louisiana claim to bring in jobs to already poor, working class communities, only to outsource jobs and leave the communities polluted and sick (take Cancer Alley for example). I used to be a river guide on the Pigeon River in Hartford Tennessee, where a paper mill upstream of the recreational section dumped harmful wastes into the river in the 1960s, turning it into a "dead river." This community now BENEFITS from the tight regulations on waste dumping, and the river has seen significant healing. Wastes from the paper mill still seep into the river, however, and the water has a distinct smell and brown color.

Of course gold mining, oil mining and refining, and paper mills are all different industries with their own operations and set of environmental/social risks. The 2015 Gold King Mine spill, which dumped toxic water waste into the Animas River, offers us a glimpse of what could happen here regardless of how careful industrial mining operations try to be. Promises of jobs and economic growth do not outweigh the ecological and cultural value of this river.

My point is that there is too much at stake. Any room for error is too much. The South Fork of the Salmon River is one of the last of its kind, and to squander this on such a short-sighted operation would be a stain on the history of environmental protection in the United States. We should not allow Idaho's most valuable watershed to become the site of the next Cancer Alley, Pigeon River, or Animas River.

Thank you for your time,
Anna Singletary