

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 9/25/2020 4:27:51 PM

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Comments: As a chemist, an avid recreationist and concerned citizen, I am highly opposed to further mining development and operations in the headwaters of the South Fork Salmon Drainage. Gold and Antimony surface mining are highly destructive to the surface topography of the area, but my main concern is contamination of surface and groundwater in the area. Substances used in these processes, like cyanide, mercury and arsenic compounds, commonly end up contaminating these fragile mountainous soil and aquatic ecosystems.

The Stibnite area is the headwaters for over half of the East Fork South Fork Salmon, near Yellowpine. The EFSF, in turn, contributes approximately half of the entire South Fork Salmon river. The South Fork is a major tributary of the Main Salmon River, the longest free-flowing river in the lower 48 states. The EFSF, the SF and the Main Salmon are all favorite kayaking and rafting destinations. In addition, these areas are rich hunting and fishing grounds. These activities result in new tourism dollars to many small Idaho towns, supporting local economies. Rigorous economic research is needed to ascertain whether the economic benefits of these recreational activities may actually exceed any expected positive impacts of the mines themselves.

The mining industry has a history of contaminating areas, going bankrupt and leaving their messes behind. I don't think ANY mining activities should be permitted without substantial funds being placed in independent escrow for cleanup. The balance of this account should be determined by independent economists and ecologists, and the resulting estimates increased by a factor of at least 2-3X, to protect against the usual sandbagging.

Idahoans no longer give the mining industry our blanket trust. Too many communities have been betrayed. We no longer see mining as a net positive to our state. Short-term economic benefits have to be weighed against long term destruction to our land and the opportunity costs of not being able to use the land for activities like recreation, which can be performed in a much more sustainable manner.

Idahoans don't want more superfund sites!