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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Sir/Ma'am

I am writing to express my concerns about the project. As an avid Outdoorsman and Whitewater Kayaker I have extreme concerns for the environmental impact this will have on Idaho. These are public lands that need to be protected. Midas claims that the pollution levels are acceptable, but this is simply not the case.

In reality, the pollution from the operation will pose unacceptable levels of risk to Idaho's native and endangered salmon, steelhead, and bull trout. It will bury valleys with millions of tons of waste rock and tailings. It will also present water quality hazards that have the potential to effect the wildlife and local communities reliant on a healthy South Fork Salmon River system.

The Salmon River Basin, represents an important wild, cold-water refuge for salmon and steelhead in a future with warmer rivers and increased human development.

Snake River Chinook salmon and steelhead as well bull trout that call the South Fork home, and are all listed under the Endangered Species Act. However, while their numbers are greatly depleted, the salmon and steelhead of the South Fork still represent an important cultural and economic fishery to communities that rely on the river.

Midas focuses on the before and after of their project and the restoration they promise to do. They fail to acknowledge the danger such a mining operation would pose to a unique and beautiful area that provides crucial habitat for Idaho's wildlife and recreational opportunities for Idaho's citizens. They are taking advantage of the fact that the site has been historically mined and degraded and attempting to do more of the same, setting the bar for any reclamation they actually do very low. Midas' pre-feasibility study discusses the engineering necessary to prevent this storage from leaking the cyanide, arsenic, and antimony expected to be present in tailings from this mine.

The placement of this tailings pond within the stream bed at the head of the South Fork is a source of obvious concern in the event of an unintended release.

The development of the mine also blatantly disregards the treaty between the Nez Perce tribe and the U.S. Government. The South Fork of the Salmon is part of the Nez Perce's territory, and the U.S. Government has sworn to help to preserve that land.

The footprint of the total operation is larger than just the mine site itself.

Because Forest Service roads are not suited for the heavy trucks and other machinery needed for a modern mining operation, existing backcountry roads must be widened and improved.

In some cases, entirely new roads must be constructed in order to facilitate access to the mine site. The road construction portion of the project will re-shape hillsides to accommodate wide roads suited for the travel of this heavy machinery. This is not acceptable.

The critical threat that this project proposes is the profound disruption of the landscape and ecosystems at the head of a South Fork tributary. It will affect water quality for the South Fork, as well as the Main Salmon, and potentially the Snake and Columbia rivers downstream.

Even if no accidents occur during mining operations, the level of dust from heavily traveled gravel and dirt roads will affect water quality. The notably clear water now in the East Fork is imperiled, placing the species and communities which rely on clean and clear rivers in jeopardy. With an annual budget of 6 million gallons of diesel

fuel consumed on site, it is hard to imagine a scenario where none of that fuel makes its way into the watershed. The same can be said for the 7 tons of ammonium nitrate, or the almost 4 tons of sodium cyanide needed for yearly operation of the mine.

Idaho's rivers are essential to the state's identity, whether for remote wilderness river trips, steelhead fishing, irrigation or providing clean water to downstream communities. 2018 marks the 50th Anniversary of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, legislation that has had tremendous benefits for Idaho's rivers, and its \$7.2 billion recreation economy. The massive mine being proposed in the headwaters of the South Fork Salmon could have monumental consequences for Idaho's rivers and economy, which are too important to risk.