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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Payette National Forest,

I write to provide informed local technical comment on the proposed Stibnite Gold Mine.

I have lived in McCall Idaho for 17 years, and am a frequent visitor to the South Fork Salmon for general recreation. The Salmon River and its tributaries represent an important sense of place to me. I camp, hike, bike, and watch wildlife on the South Fork of the Salmon River and raft the Salmon River and/or its tributaries annually at a minimum. The unspoiled nature of these rivers is at the heart of my life in Idaho. I am retired from a professional career.

First, I request you extend the comment period. The present comment period is simply too short for me to review the document for general context, nor to read and consider relevant sections and write substantive comment. This is a highly complex mining proposal. The DEIS has been in process for over three years. The Covid 19 pandemic has reduced opportunity for public hearings. So public written comment is the only remaining method for public input. Under these circumstances, the choice of a 75 day comment period instead of 120 days, appears not in the public interest.

Second, I am very concerned about the impact that the mine will have on the following:

1. Local economy. The DEIS fails to consider the true potential for economic cost created by the project. Formerly a resident of Colorado, I have experienced the destructive effects of "boom and bust" economies. This is something I oppose for McCall and Valley County, as our natural resources presently provide an attractive, healthy and growing economy. DEIS 4.21-29 admits "the post-closure decrease in employment and other related economic activity could result in adverse economic impacts on the local area's economy from the "bust" following the prior "boom" from the SGP's construction and operations employment and spending".

A popular local conception and advertised benefit of the project is that it will boost local economy, create critical jobs, and contribute to economic recovery. However, the DEIS indicates (pg. 4.21-5) "1,400 indirect and induced jobs would be supported annually by the SGP", and "Most of this employment would occur outside the local economy", and "at the national level, these are not necessarily additional jobs and income in the United States compared to the No Action Alternative".

2. Fish. The Executive Summary ES-25 states that 20-26% of Chinook salmon critical habitat, and 27-69% of bull trout critical habitat, will be destroyed. Mitigation for losses of these threatened fish under the "protection" of the Endangered Species Act is not specifically explained. Habitat loss for these fish should not be allowed. Salmon and bull trout are iconic fish to Idaho, threatened with extinction, need clean and cold water with habitats in which to spawn and rear, and encompass the lifeblood of the area.

3. Contaminants downstream of the mine. The Executive Summary ES-25 also states that arsenic, mercury, and methyl mercury will be increased in surface water in the East Fork South Fork Salmon River, but the details downstream of the mining site are not well explained. As a boater and with a family member who is a kayaker, this is alarming, as the East Fork is a popular boating destination, and water is ingested by recreationists engaging in these activities. The project, facilitated by the 1872 mining law, may allow mining on patented claims, but deleterious downstream effects are another situation. The DEIS needs to explain in detail how contaminants will be treated in perpetuity to avoid downstream effects.

Thank you for your consideration.

