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Comments: The Stibnite Gold Project poses a threat not only to the fish and wildlife populations that it would directly impact, but also to Idaho as a whole. This is the Gem State, a state known for its beautiful wilderness and the wildlife and recreation that it both provides and protects.

This area has the most important remaining spawning habitat for chinook salmon in the Columbia River Basin, and area that has been degraded as a fishery since the late 1800's as the result of careless industry. We likely will never be able to recover the salmon and steelhead runs to historical numbers, but the first step in sustainability and conservation is to add no further damage.

While Midas Gold claims that impacts will be minimal and that they will recover the damaged areas, this is simply not possible. The mine has a proposed life cycle of 25 years. Salmon and steelhead populations are already hanging in the balance- 25 years of intensively degraded habitat, destruction of spawning grounds and blocked access to other spawning habitat would cause the extinction of many of Idaho's remaining runs.

With all of the other barriers and threats to our fisheries, we cannot afford to add one more. Not for the fish, not for those whose livelihoods revolve around these areas remaining unharmed, and not for the public to whom these lands belong.

To quote Idaho Rivers United:

"The EFSF Salmon River provides critical habitat for 3 ESA listed fish species: chinook salmon, steelhead, and bull trout. The National Marine Fisheries Service has designated all tributaries of the Salmon River presently or historically accessible to Chinook salmon, including the entire South Fork System.

The river system is also world renowned for its incredible fly fishing opportunities. Much of the river system is remote, untouched, and wild, making it a perfect river system for producing record-setting

Additionally, the South Fork Salmon River is vital to Idaho's efforts in salmon restoration. Flowing into the main stem Salmon River, the health of this waterway directly impacts the health of salmon that migrate to Idaho to spawn. A dam break or leak at the mine site could have catastrophic consequences for this ecologically and economically important river system, and decades of salmon restoration work.

Compromising the South Fork Salmon and Salmon rivers would not just compromise our ability to enjoy it; it would impact our recreation economy and the riverside communities that are built around it.

The EFSF Salmon River is an incredible recreational resource. It is a popular destination for flyfishing, hunting, camping, hiking, and is renowned for its whitewater. Downstream, the SF Salmon is suitable for Wild and Scenic Designation, and is world famous for its whitewater and scenic character. The Salmon River is a destination river, and people travel from all over the world to this remote river to explore and enjoy it. Many guiding and outfitting businesses rely on the Salmon River for their expeditions, making it central to Idaho's recreation economy.

Access to 13,446 acres of public land would be lost, in addition to the 3,423 acres that would comprise the mine footprint, for a minimum of 20 years. This area falls within the Nez Perce Tribe's aboriginal hunting, fishing, and foraging grounds, to which they have treaty rights. It has also been enjoyed by Idahoans for hunting, fishing, and camping for generations.

Additionally, the Midas Gold has emphasized to investors that there is a high potential for expansion beyond the current project. Expansion of the project would likely result in a greater loss of access to lands, and alter the timeframe for how long these lands would be inaccessible.

4. RISK OF OPEN PIT AND GOLD MINING

Research from the U.S. Geological Survey shows that nearly every gold mine spills hazardous materials. Gold mines almost always pollute ground or surface water, and those that do not typically lack a nearby water source.

Based on recent research on pollution from gold mines, it is a near certain probability that the Midas Gold Stibnite Mine Project will spill hazardous materials and/or pollute surface or ground water within the Salmon River Watershed.

The East Fork of the South Fork of the Salmon River is productive habitat for endangered and threatened chinook, steelhead and bull trout. Much of the area is pristine wilderness, and parts of the Salmon River system are eligible for Wild & Scenic River designation. Mining in the headwaters would negatively impact water quality and cause a reduction of Bull Trout and Chinook habitat within the operation boundaries. Access would be lost to vast areas of public land, and previously undisturbed land would be a part of the project.

Creeks and streams on or near the site already have high levels of arsenic from legacy mining impacts. Reopening the mining district would lead to more arsenic, mercury and other heavy metals being released into Idaho rivers.

The potential for a major leak or contamination event would lead to river water quality compromises locally, but also regionally. Stibnite is located near the headwaters of the South Fork of the Salmon River. Therefore, if there were to be a cataclysmic contamination event, the repercussions would extend to Riggins, Lewiston and beyond. The downstream communities are dependent upon the Salmon River for their economies, and any actions that could compromise livelihoods should be considered dangerous."

As a United States citizen and a citizen of Idaho, I ask that the USFS uphold its obligation to the public and not deny them access to 13,000 acres of public land while also irredeemably altering and destroying 3,500 acres of wilderness that is critical to the continued survival of chinook salmon, bull trout and steelhead.

Thank you.