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First name: Lisa

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Forest Service decision-makers,

As a Montana kayaker who regularly visits Idaho for its spectacular whitewater, the South Fork Salmon River holds special memories for me. From a recreational perspective, this river draws paddlers from across the country and world to experience its different phases from class V big water to technical creeking. While often difficult to quantify, water quality underlies quality paddling. Polluted waters vacant of fish and other biotic life have little appeal to paddlers who treasure quality whitewater in remote wilderness-like settings. Although not true wilderness, the SFS has that same character, and that experience should be protected for future generations of paddlers and fishermen. It is a certainty that the Stibnite mine will negatively affect water quality, more so than it already is from previous mining efforts, and the agency has the obligation to reject projects that degrade water quality in its Wild and Scenic Rivers, even if those projects do not occur on a designated river segment. Upstream projects can and should be vetoed if they degrade downstream water quality. As the SFS flows into the Main Salmon, the agency is legally obligated to enhance water quality and allowing additional mining--done so under the guise of restoration--violates the agency's commitment to its WSRs. Valley county has already seen the boom/bust cycle of mining repeat many times with no sustainable positive benefit to the economy, and as a tourist destination, the county derives the most revenue from supporting outdoor recreation. Extractive industries have repeatedly proven that they destroy intact ecosystems, offer no longterm sustainable wage jobs, and ultimately make messes on public lands--which belong to me and everyone else--that taxpayers get stuck paying to try and remediate. A gold mine: nearly the size of metro Boise requiring new roads and electrical infrastructure that will affect many more acres of public lands beyond its actual footprint, situated at the headwaters of pristine wild country adjacent to the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness, upstream from one of the country's most renowned WSRs--is there a worse idea? I don't think so. As the caretaker of my public lands, please do your job and protect this river for me, my kids, and all other paddlers and recreationists. I sympathize with the difficulty of this decision especially under an administration that favors industry, but protecting public lands for public--not private--uses and benefit has always been a winning solution.